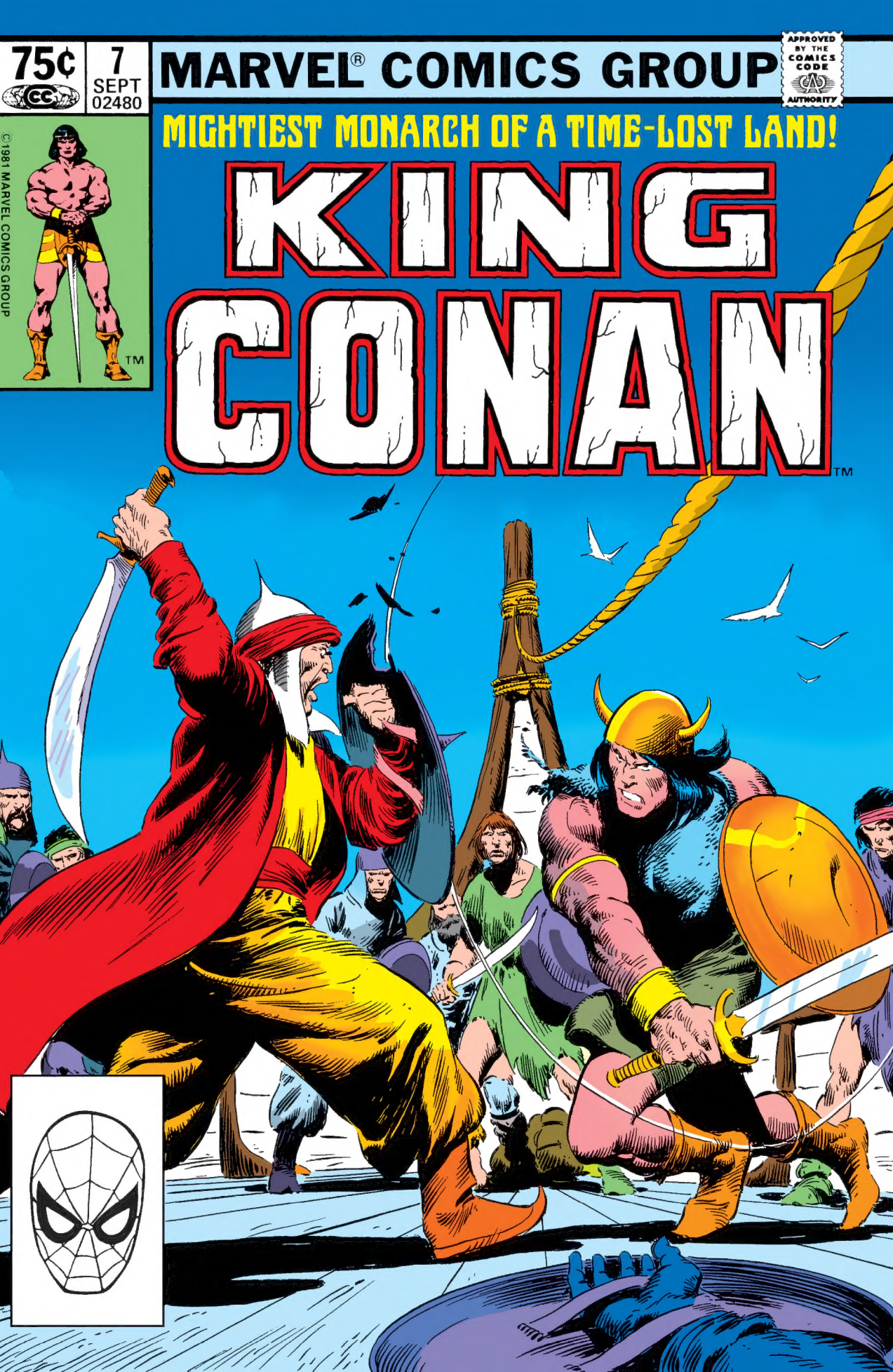

75¢
7
SEPT
02480
MARVEL® COMICS GROUP
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MIGHTIEST MONARCH OF A TIME-LOST LAND!
KING CONAN™
©1981 MARVEL COMICS GROUP

"Know, O prince, that the man called Conan was all things in his day: a thief, a reaver, a slayer... fierce sellsword and fiercer pirate... and finally, usurper king of proud, civilized Aquilonia, mightiest of Hyborian kingdoms... with his queen Zenobia at his side, and his son Prince Conn ripe to carry on the legend. ."

—*The Nemedian Chronicles.*

Stan Lee PRESENTS: KING CONAN

Featuring The Epic Adventurer Created By ROBERT E. HOWARD

A CLASH OF KINGS!

SOMEWHERE ON THE ROAD BACK TO AQUILONIA, COUNT TROCERO CONTINUES THE TALE HE TELLS PRINCE CONN, SON OF CONAN:

I STILL SEE IT NOW, YOUNG PRINCE, AS IT WAS RECOUNTED TO ME LATER BY YOUR FATHER--

--KING CONAN, MONARCH OF AQUILONIA, MUNCHING STALE BREAD IN THE DUNGEONS OF HIS OLD ENEMY YEZDIGERD, KING OF TURAN.

AND PERHAPS IT BOTHERED HIM MOST OF ALL THAT HE HAD BEEN CAPTURED BECAUSE OF...

*FROM LAST ISSUE--R.T.

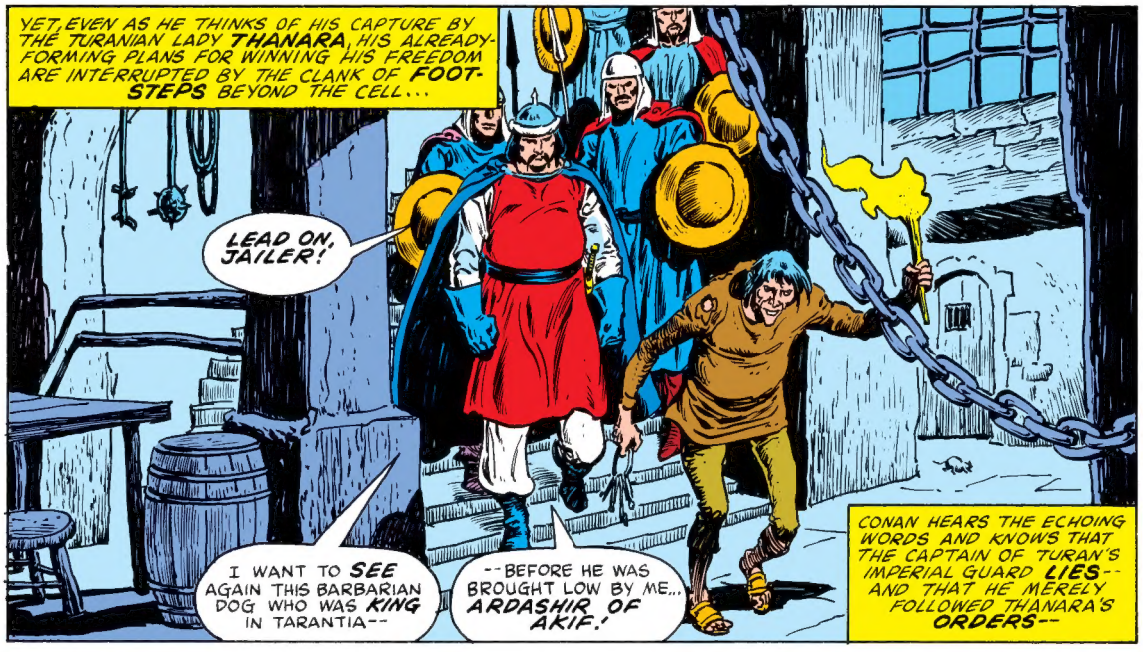
--A WOMAN, CURSE HER DEVIOUS SOUL!

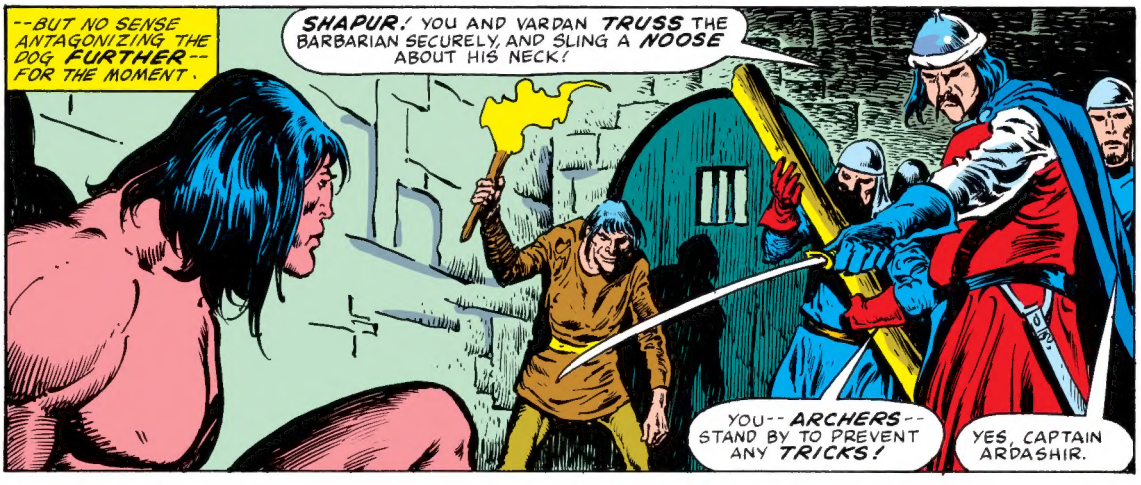
CONTINUING OUR ADAPTATION OF THE NOVEL BY L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP & LIN CARTER

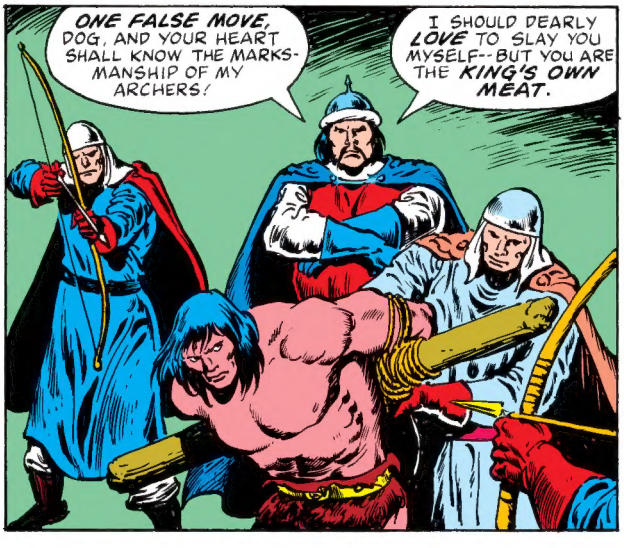
FEATURING THE HERO CREATED BY ROBERT E. HOWARD.

ROY THOMAS * JOHN BUSCEMA & ERNIE CHAN
WRITER ILLUSTRATORS
GEORGE ROUSSOS | JANICE CHIANG
COLORIST LETTERER
LOUISE JONES - EDITOR
JIM SHOOTER - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

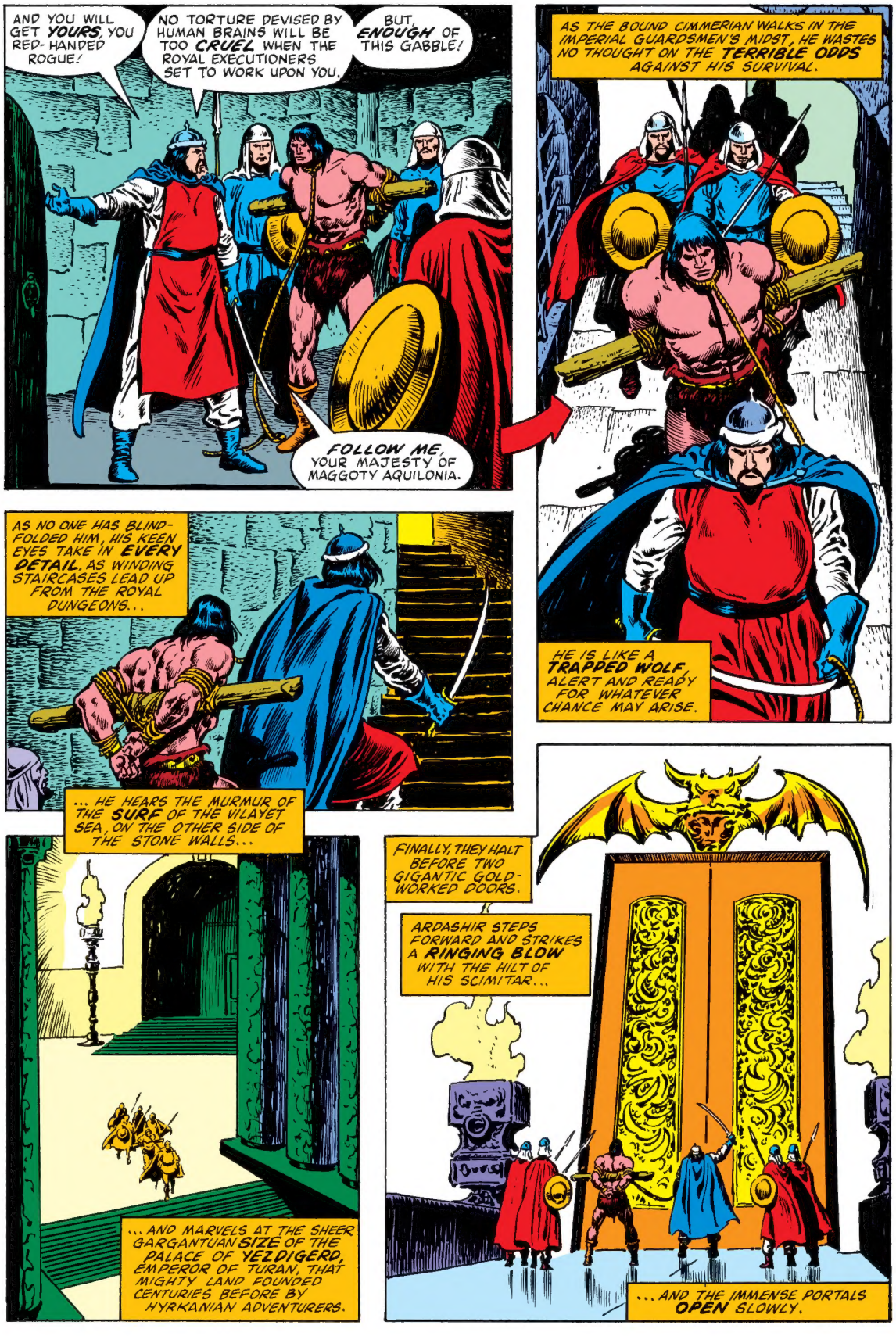
CONAN THE BARBARIAN Published Monthly by MARVEL WORLDWIDE, INC., a subsidiary of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT, LLC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 1290 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10104. Copyright © 2022 Conan Properties International LLC ("CPI"). CONAN, CONAN THE BARBARIAN, HYBORIA, THE SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN and related logos, characters, names, and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks or registered trademarks of CPI. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Marvel and its logos are TM Marvel Characters, Inc.

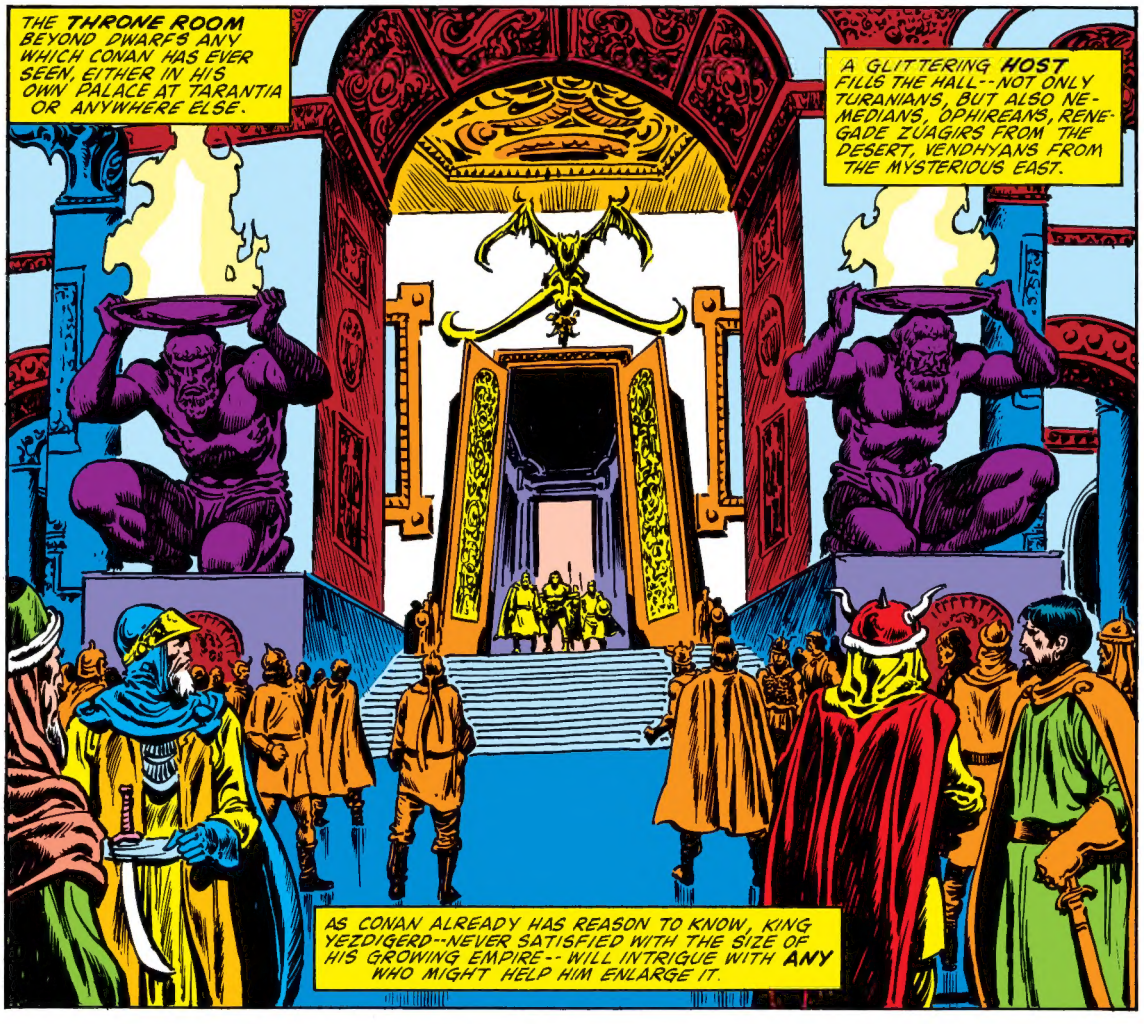

YET, EVEN AS HE THINKS OF HIS CAPTURE BY THE TURANIAN LADY THANARA, HIS ALREADY-FORMING PLANS FOR WINNING HIS FREEDOM ARE INTERRUPTED BY THE CLANK OF FOOT-STEPS BEYOND THE CELL...
LEAD ON, JAILER!
I WANT TO SEE AGAIN THIS BARBARIAN DOG WHO WAS KING IN TARANTIA--
--BEFORE HE WAS BROUGHT LOW BY ME,, ARDASHIR OF AKIF.!
CONAN HEARS THE ECHOING WORDS AND KNOWS THAT THE CAPTAIN OF TURAN'S IMPERIAL GUARD LIES-- AND THAT HE MERELY FOLLOWED THANARA'S ORDERS--


--BUT NO SENSE ANTAGONIZING THE DOG FURTHER-- FOR THE MOMENT.
SHAPUR! YOU AND VARDAN TRUSS THE BARBARIAN SECURELY, AND SLING A NOOSE ABOUT HIS NECK!
YOU-- ARCHERS-- STAND BY TO PREVENT ANY TRICKS!
YES, CAPTAIN ARDASHIR.


ONE FALSE MOVE, DOG, AND YOUR HEART SHALL KNOW THE MARKS-MANSHIP OF MY ARCHERS!
I SHOULD DEARLY LOVE TO SLAY YOU MYSELF--BUT YOU ARE THE KING'S OWN MEAT.

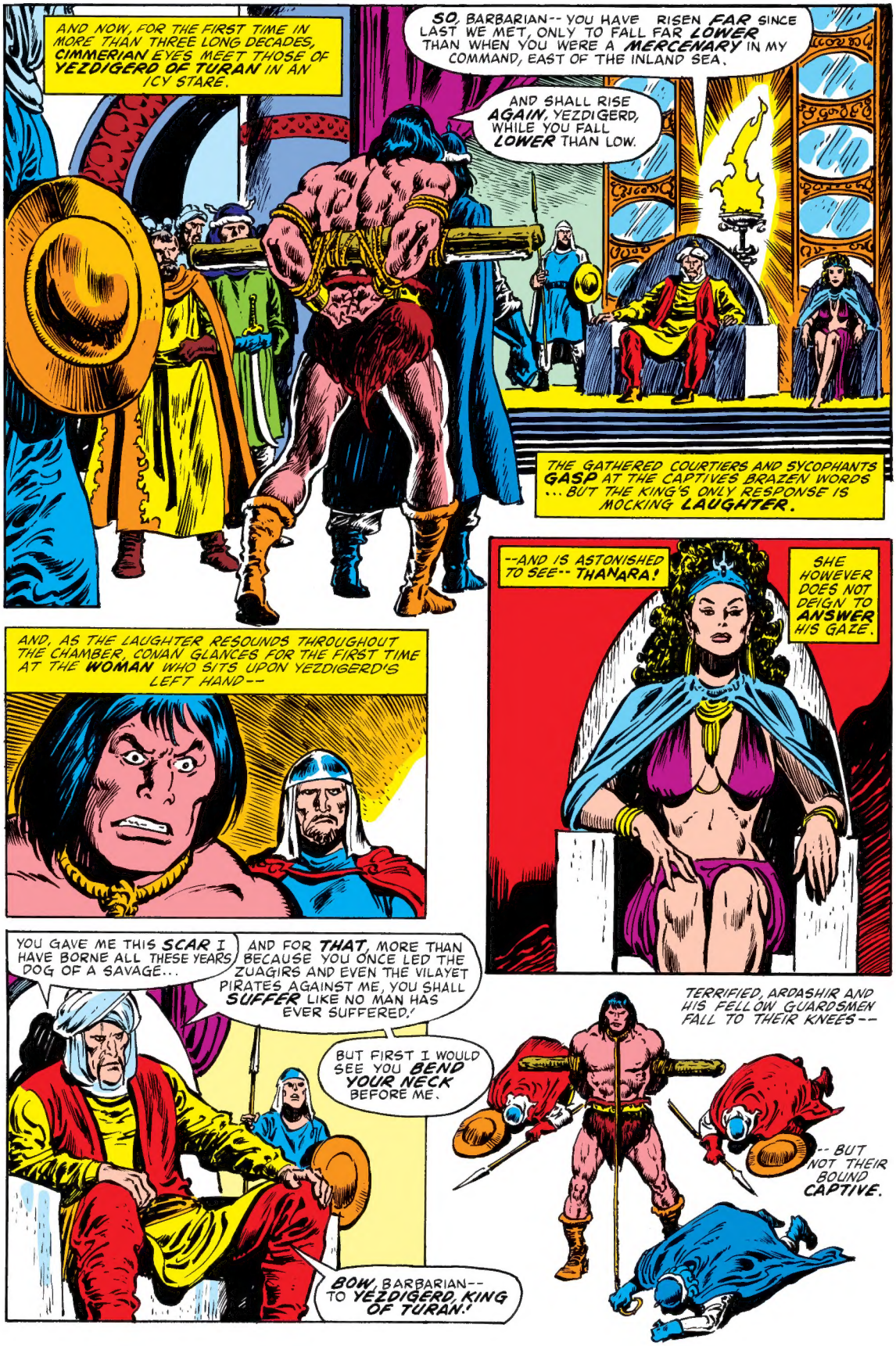
AS THE SOLDIERS FASTEN THEIR LOG IN PLACE, CONAN'S CHILL BLUE EYES REGARD THE MADDENED OFFICER WITHOUT EMOTION.
YOU TURANIAN SWINE WILL GET WHAT YOU DESERVE SOONER OR LATER... YOU WILL SEE.
AT THE SAME TIME, AND WITHOUT APPARENT EFFORT, HE TENSES HIS HUGE ARM MUSCLES...
...SO THAT HIS ROPES ARE STRETCHED TO THEIR GREATEST TAUTNESS AT THE MOMENT OF TYING.


AND YOU WILL GET YOURS, YOU RED-HANDED ROGUE!
NO TORTURE DEVISED BY HUMAN BRAINS WILL BE TOO CRUEL WHEN THE ROYAL EXECUTIONERS SET TO WORK UPON YOU.
BUT, ENOUGH OF THIS GABBLE!
FOLLOW ME, YOUR MAJESTY OF MAGGOTY AQUILONIA.
AS THE BOUND CIMMERIAN WALKS IN THE IMPERIAL GUARDSMEN'S MIDST, HE WASTES NO THOUGHT ON THE TERRIBLE ODDS AGAINST HIS SURVIVAL.
HE IS LIKE A TRAPPED WOLF ALERT AND READY FOR WHATEVER CHANCE MAY ARISE.
AS NO ONE HAS BLINDFOLDED HIM, HIS KEEN EYES TAKE IN EVERY DETAIL. AS WINDING STAIRCASES LEAD UP FROM THE ROYAL DUNGEONS...
... HE HEARS THE MURMUR OF THE SURF OF THE VILAYET SEA, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STONE WALLS...
... AND MARVELS AT THE SHEER GARGANTUAN SIZE OF THE PALACE OF YEZDIGERD, EMPEROR OF TURAN, THAT MIGHTY LAND FOUNDED CENTURIES BEFORE BY HYRKANIAN ADVENTURERS.
FINALLY, THEY HALT BEFORE TWO GIGANTIC GOLD-WORKED DOORS.
ARDASHIR STEPS FORWARD AND STRIKES A RINGING BLOW WITH THE HILT OF HIS SCIMITAR...
... AND THE IMMENSE PORTALS OPEN SLOWLY.


THE THRONE ROOM BEYOND DWARFS ANY WHICH CONAN HAS EVER SEEN, EITHER IN HIS OWN PALACE AT TARANTIA OR ANYWHERE ELSE.
A GLITTERING HOST FILLS THE HALL--NOT ONLY TURANIANS, BUT ALSO NEMEDIANS, OPHIREANS, RENEGADE ZUAGIRS FROM THE DESERT, VENDHYANS FROM THE MYSTERIOUS EAST.
AS CONAN ALREADY HAS REASON TO KNOW, KING YEZDIGERD--NEVER SATISFIED WITH THE SIZE OF HIS GROWING EMPIRE-- WILL INTRIGUE WITH ANY WHO MIGHT HELP HIM ENLARGE IT.

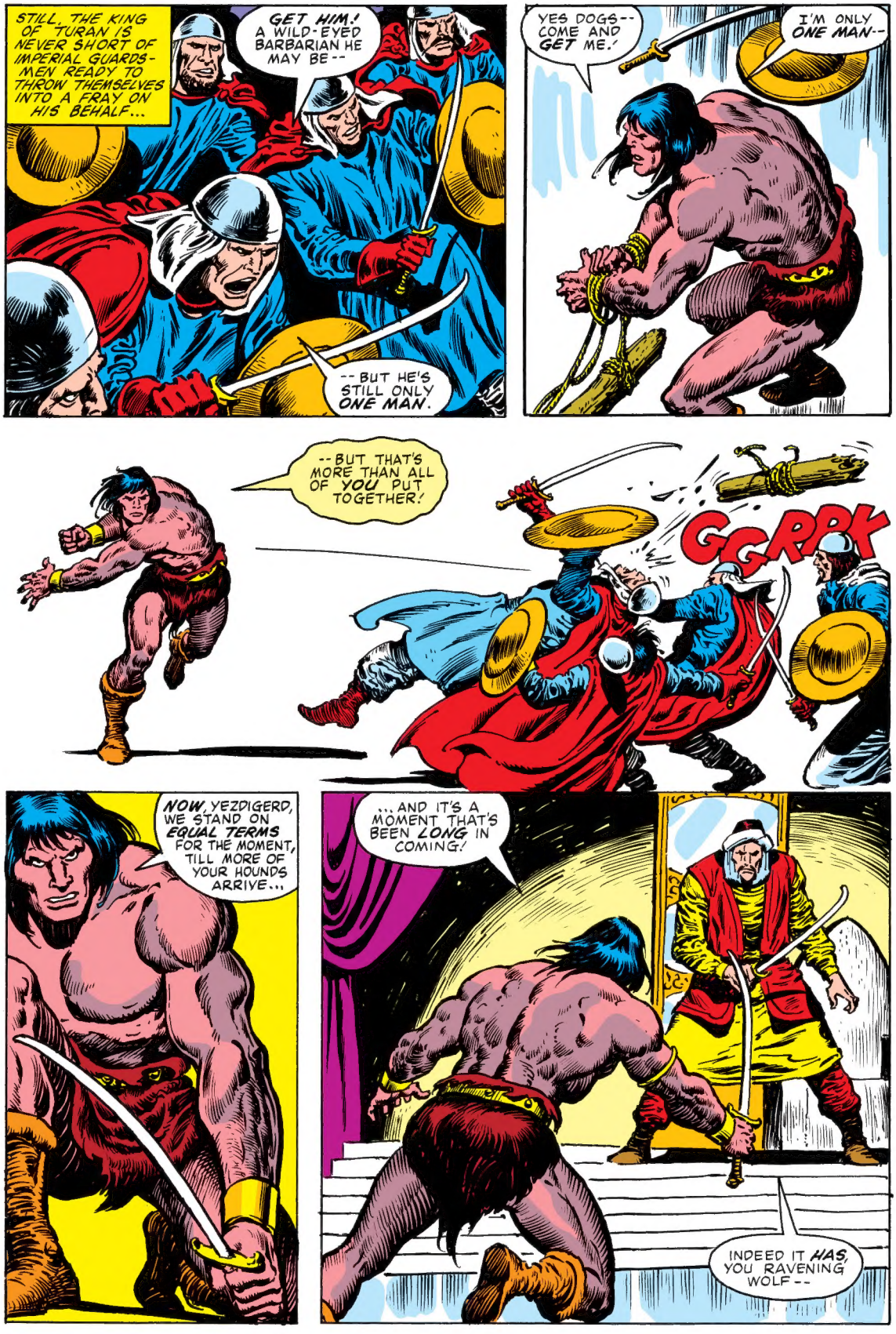
THEN, TO THE BLARE OF GOLDEN TRUMPETS, AN AVENUE OPENS THROUGH THE MILLING MASS...
...AND CONAN WONDERS WHAT FORM YEZDIGERD'S VENGEANCE WILL TAKE, FOR THE WOUND HE DEALT THE TURANIAN YEARS BEFORE AT DOOMED MAKKALET.*
*CONAN#19 --R.T.

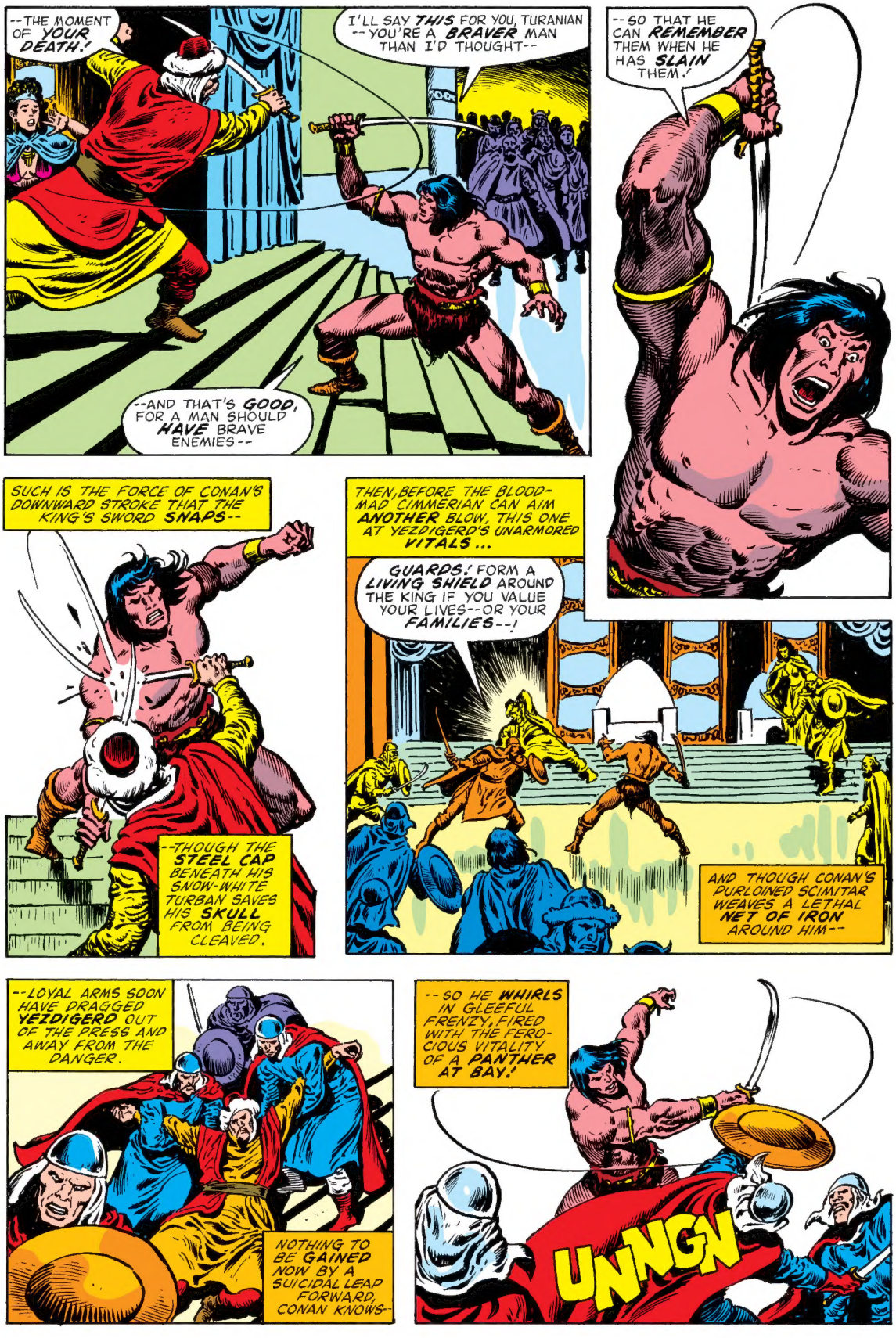
MUSING THUS INTENTLY, CONAN FAILS TO NOTICE THE LONE YELLOW-HAIRED WARRIOR, OBVIOUSLY A NORTHERNER, STANDING AMID THE THRONG--
--LET ALONE THE SLIGHTEST WIDENING OF THE BLOND GIANT'S GREY EYES IN SUDDEN RECOGNITION, BEFORE HE CATCHES HIMSELF AND RETURNS TO AN IMAGE OF IMPERTURBABILITY.

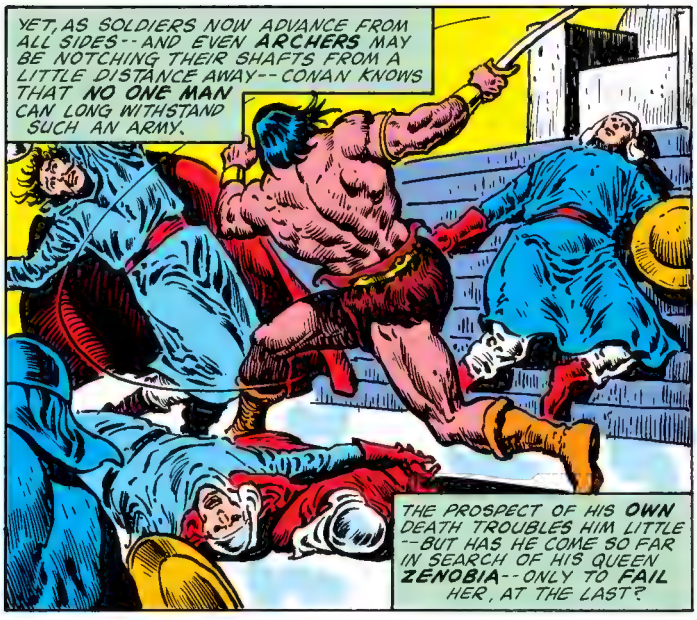

AND NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MORE THAN THREE LONG DECADES, CIMMERIAN EYES MEET THOSE OF YEZDIGERD OF TURAN IN AN ICY STARE.
SO, BARBARIAN-- YOU HAVE RISEN FAR SINCE LAST WE MET, ONLY TO FALL FAR LOWER THAN WHEN YOU WERE A MERCENARY IN MY COMMAND, EAST OF THE INLAND SEA.
AND SHALL RISE AGAIN, YEZDIGERD, WHILE YOU FALL LOWER THAN LOW.
THE GATHERED COURTIERS AND SYCOPHANTS GASP AT THE CAPTIVES BRAZEN WORDS ... BUT THE KING'S ONLY RESPONSE IS MOCKING LAUGHTER.
--AND IS ASTONISHED TO SEE-- THANARA!
SHE HOWEVER DOES NOT DEIGN TO ANSWER HIS GAZE.
AND, AS THE LAUGHTER RESOUNDS THROUGHOUT THE CHAMBER, CONAN GLANCES FOR THE FIRST TIME AT THE WOMAN WHO SITS UPON YEZDIGERD'S LEFT HAND--
YOU GAVE ME THIS SCAR I HAVE BORNE ALL THESE YEARS DOG OF A SAVAGE...
AND FOR THAT, MORE THAN BECAUSE YOU ONCE LED THE ZUAGIRS AND EVEN THE VILAYET PIRATES AGAINST ME, YOU SHALL SUFFER LIKE NO MAN HAS EVER SUFFERED!
BUT FIRST I WOULD SEE YOU BEND YOUR NECK BEFORE ME.
BOW, BARBARIAN-- TO YEZDIGERD, KING OF TURAN!
TERRIFIED, ARDASHIR AND HIS FELLOW GUARDSMEN FALL TO THEIR KNEES--
-- BUT NOT THEIR BOUND CAPTIVE.

AND WHEN THE CAPTAIN FROM AKIE SENSES THE STRAIN UPON THE ROPE HE HOLDS--
DOWN, YOU FOOL! BOW BEFORE THE KING!
YOU BOW AND SCRAPE LIKE A DOG SEEKING SCRAPS! I'LL NOT--
DOWN, I SAY!
A THOUSAND PARDONS, MOST HIGH YEZDIGERD, BUT I MUST TEACH THE BARBARIAN HOW TO--
YOU COULDN'T TEACH A HOUND TO SQUAT, TURANIAN!
UHHHN
I PAY HOMAGE TO NO HYKRANIAN PIG WHO WAGES HIS WARS WITH THE HELP OF WOMEN!
CAN YOU HANDLE A SWORD YOURSELF, YEZIGERD, ANY BETTER THAN WHEN I CARVED A MAP ON YOUR FACE, YEARS AGO?
GRAB A WEAPON AND I'LL SHOW YOU HOW A REAL MAN FIGHTS!
YEZDIGERD OF TURAN, HOWEVER, DID NOT INCREASE THE BOUNDARIES OF HIS EMPIRE FAR MORE THAN HIS WEAK PREDECESSOR YILDIZ, BY RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES TO SINGLE COMBAT.
I SEE I'LL GAIN NO SATISFACTION FROM THE BARBARIAN UNTIL HE'S BROKEN ON THE RACK.
AND EVEN DURING HIS SHORT, IMPASSIONED SPEECH, CONAN RELAXES THE TAUT MUSCLES OF HIS ARMS --SO THAT THE ROPE BINDING THEM GOES SLACK.
TAKE HIM, THEN-- --AND BEGIN HIS HELL ON EARTH!

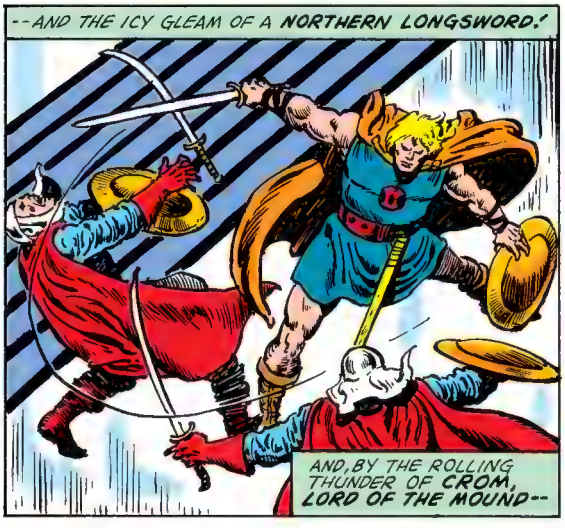
NAY, YEZDIGERD!
I SHALL NOW BEGIN YOURS!
HIS GREAT ARMS POSSESSING MORE LEVERAGE NOW--CONAN FLEXES HIS MUSCLES--FINDS A WEAK SPOT HE'D NOTED BEFORE IN THE LOG HOLDING HIM AND--
TARIM'S BLOOD! THE DOG HAS BROKEN FREE!
SLAY HIM!
YOU TURANIANS ARE GOOD AT GIVING ORDERS, BE YOU CAPTAIN OR KING!
WHY DON'T YOU COME SLAY ME YOURSELF, ARPASHIR?
BY ERLIK, I SHALL!
AAAAA
AS THE OFFICER IS HURLED ACROSS THE FLOOR BY THE IMPACT, HIS BODY SPINNING LIKE A THROWN DOLL--
-- THE THRONG SEEMS TO FREEZE FOR A SPLIT SECOND INTO A SINGLE UNMOVING MASS--
ARRRHH-!
--AND BY THE TIME SEVERAL GUARDSMEN CHARGE HIM, CONAN IS READY ONCE AGAIN WITH BOTH HALVES OF THE WEIGHTY JAGGED-EDGED LOG!

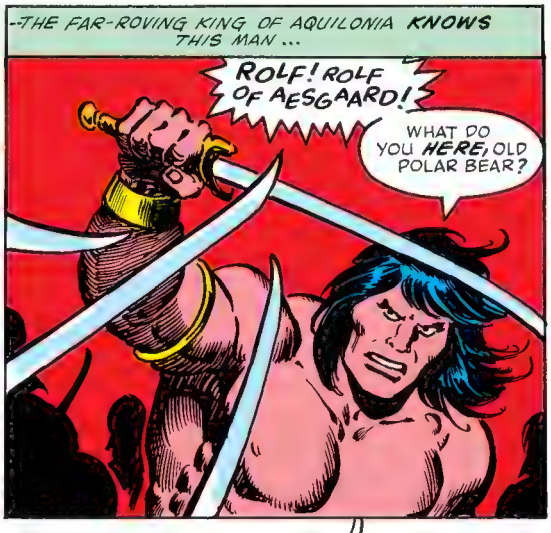

STILL, THE KING OF TURAN IS NEVER SHORT OF IMPERIAL GUARDSMEN READY TO THROW THEMSELVES INTO A FRAY ON HIS BEHALF...
GET HIM! A WILD-EYED BARBARIAN HE MAY BE--
--BUT HE'S STILL ONLY ONE MAN.
YES DOGS-- COME AND GET ME!
I'M ONLY ONE MAN--
--BUT THAT'S MORE THAN ALL OF YOU PUT TOGETHER!
GGRRK
NOW, YEZDIGERD, WE STAND ON EQUAL TERMS FOR THE MOMENT, TILL MORE OF YOUR HOUNDS ARRIVE...
...AND IT'S A MOMENT THAT'S BEEN LONG IN COMING!
INDEED IT HAS, YOU RAVENING WOLF--


--THE MOMENT OF YOUR DEATH!
I'LL SAY THIS FOR YOU, TURANIAN --YOU'RE A BRAVER MAN THAN I'D THOUGHT--
--AND THAT'S GOOD, FOR A MAN SHOULD HAVE BRAVE ENEMIES--
--SO THAT HE CAN REMEMBER THEM WHEN HE HAS SLAIN THEM.'
SUCH IS THE FORCE OF CONAN'S DOWNWARD STROKE THAT THE KING'S SWORD SNAPS--
--THOUGH THE STEEL CAP BENEATH HIS SNOW-WHITE TURBAN SAVES HIS SKULL FROM BEING CLEAVED.
THEN, BEFORE THE BLOOD-MAD CIMMERIAN CAN AIM ANOTHER BLOW, THIS ONE AT YEZDIGERD'S UNARMORED VITALS ...
GUARDS! FORM A LIVING SHIELD AROUND THE KING IF YOU VALUE YOUR LIVES--OR YOUR FAMILIES--!
AND THOUGH CONAN'S PURLOINED SCIMITAR WEAVES A LETHAL NET OF IRON AROUND HIM--
--LOYAL ARMS SOON HAVE DRAGGED YEZDIGERD OUT OF THE PRESS AND AWAY FROM THE DANGER.
NOTHING TO BE GAINED NOW BY A SUICIDAL LEAP FORWARD, CONAN KNOWS--
--SO HE WHIRLS IN GLEEFUL FRENZY, FIRED WITH THE FEROCIOUS VITALITY OF A PANTHER AT BAY!
UNNGN

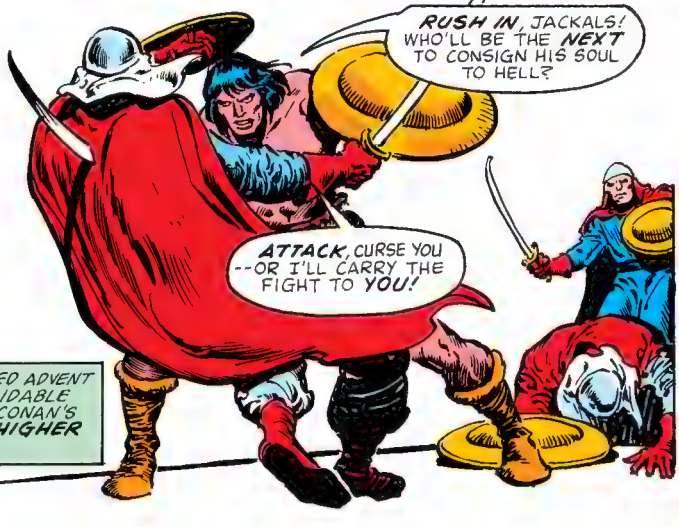

YET, AS SOLDIERS NOW ADVANCE FROM ALL SIDES--AND EVEN ARCHERS MAY BE NOTCHING THEIR SHAFTS FROM A LITTLE DISTANCE AWAY--CONAN KNOWS THAT NO ONE MAN CAN LONG WITHSTAND SUCH AN ARMY.
THE PROSPECT OF HIS OWN DEATH TROUBLES HIM LITTLE--BUT HAS HE COME SO FAR IN SEARCH OF HIS QUEEN ZENOBIA--ONLY TO FAIL HER, AT THE LAST?

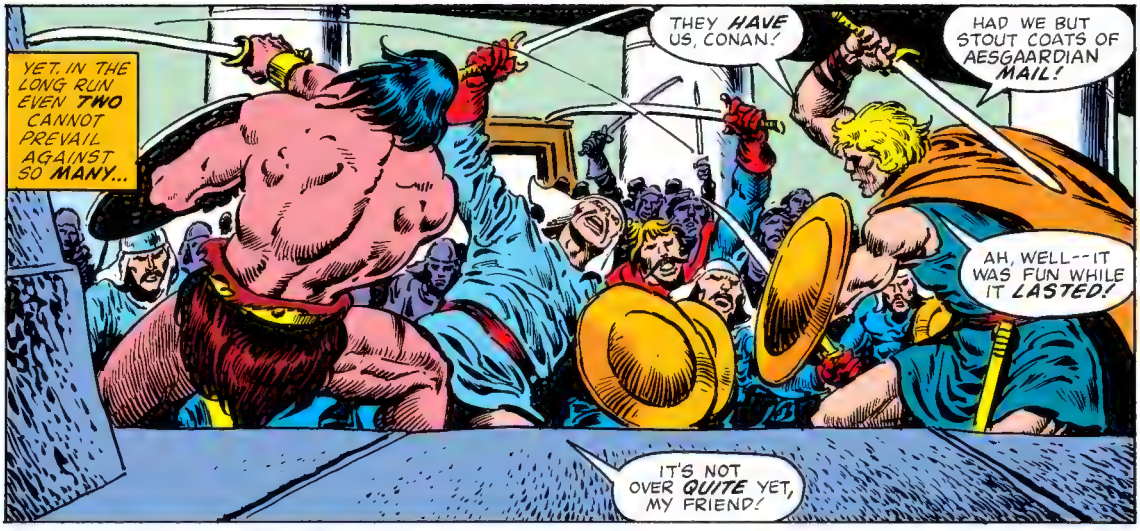
THEN, SUDDENLY, THERE COMES FROM A NEW DIRECTION THE CLASH OF STEEL ON STEEL--
WHO THE DEVIL--?

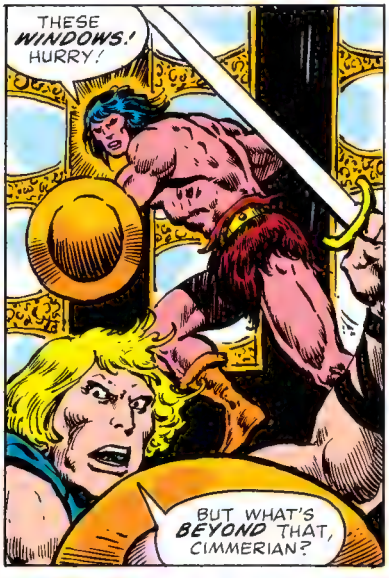

--AND THE ICY GLEAM OF A NORTHERN LONGSWORD!
AND, BY THE ROLLING THUNDER OF CROM, LORD OF THE MOUND--

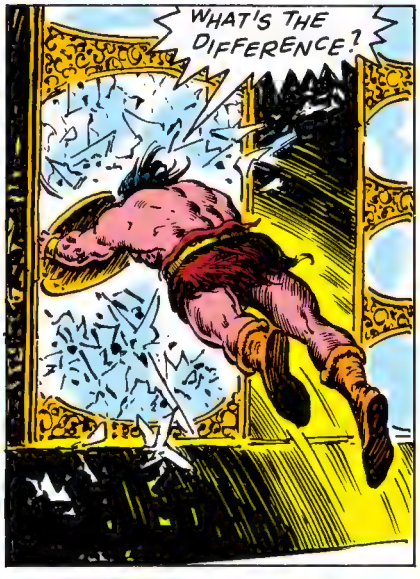

--THE FAR-ROVING KING OF AQUILONIA KNOWS THIS MAN...
ROLF! ROLF OF AESGAARD!
WHAT DO YOU HERE, OLD POLAR BEAR?

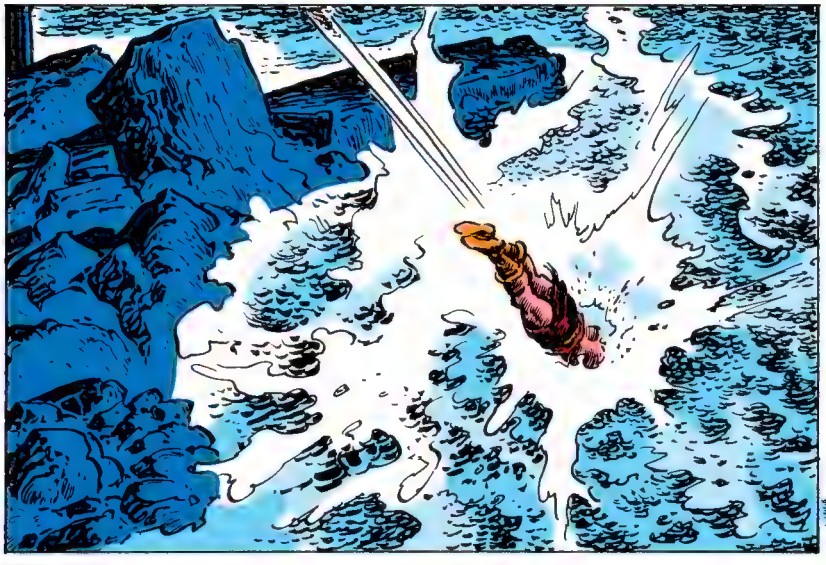
I'LL TELL YOU LATER, CIMMERIAN --IF WE LIVE!
IN THE MEANTIME--CATCH THIS!
THE UNEXPECTED ADVENT OF THIS FORMIDABLE ALLY, RAISES CONAN'S SPIRITS EVEN HIGHER AND--

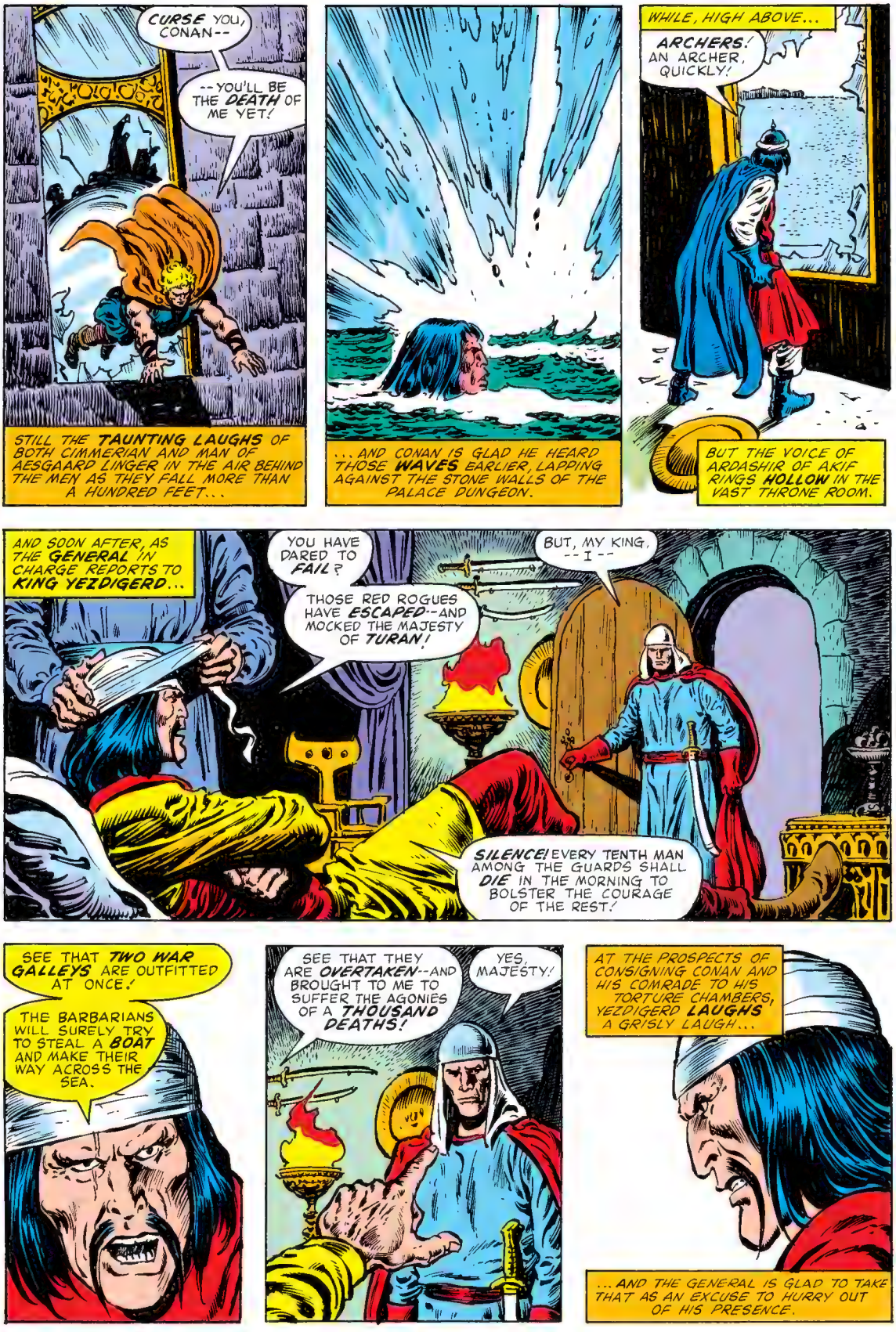

RUSH IN, JACKALS! WHO'LL BE THE NEXT TO CONSIGN HIS SOUL TO HELL?
ATTACK, CURSE YOU --OR I'LL CARRY THE FIGHT TO YOU!

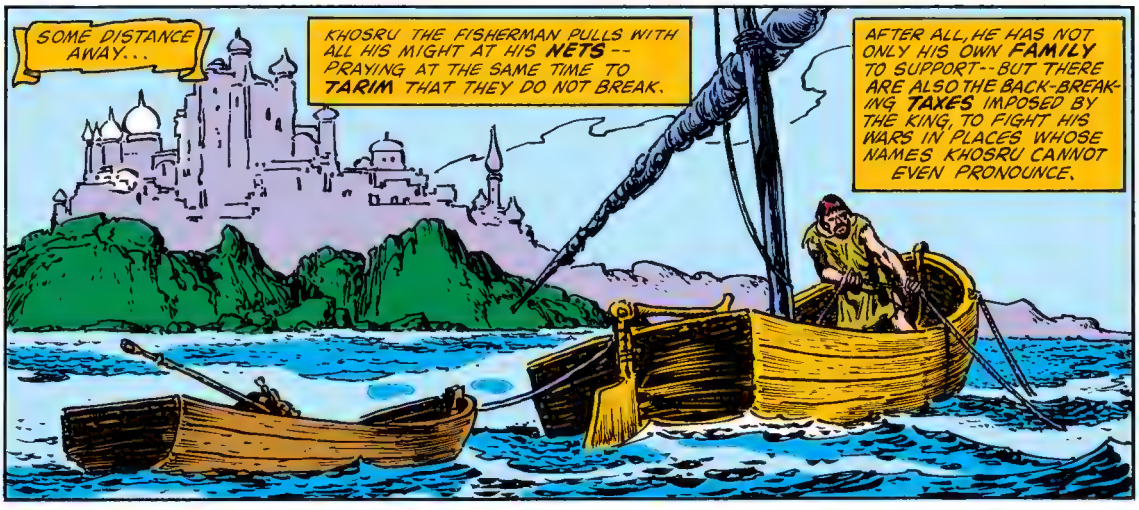

YET, IN THE LONG RUN EVEN TWO CANNOT PREVAIL AGAINST SO MANY...
THEY HAVE US, CONAN!
HAD WE BUT STOUT COATS OF AESGAARDIAN MAIL!
AH, WELL--IT WAS FUN WHILE IT LASTED!
IT'S NOT OVER QUITE YET, MY FRIEND!

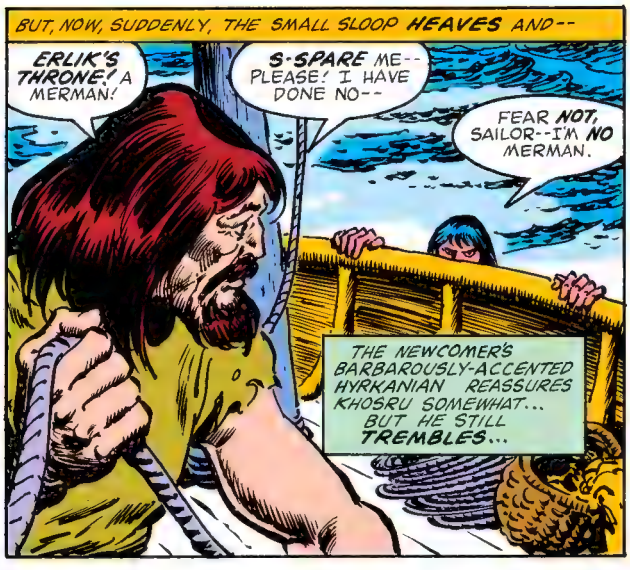

THESE WINDOWS! HURRY!
BUT WHAT'S BEYOND THAT, CIMMERIAN?

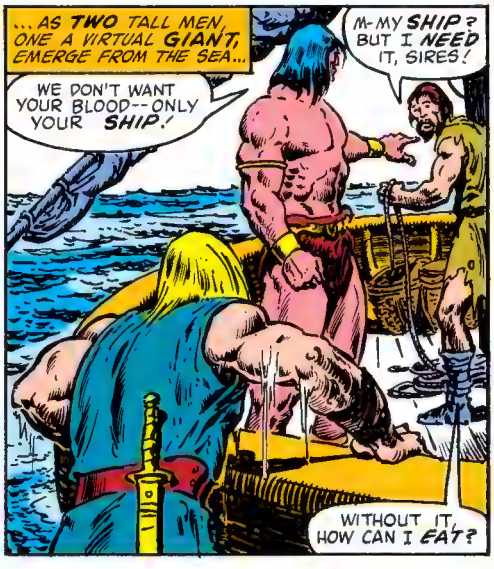

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?




CURSE YOU, CONAN--
--YOU'LL BE THE DEATH OF ME YET!
STILL THE TAUNTING LAUGHS OF BOTH CIMMERIAN AND MAN OF AESGAARD LINGER IN THE AIR BEHIND THE MEN AS THEY FALL MORE THAN A HUNDRED FEET...
...AND CONAN IS GLAD HE HEARD THOSE WAVES EARLIER, LAPPING AGAINST THE STONE WALLS OF THE PALACE DUNGEON.
WHILE, HIGH ABOVE...
ARCHERS! AN ARCHER, QUICKLY!
BUT THE VOICE OF ARDASHIR OF AKIF RINGS HOLLOW IN THE VAST THRONE ROOM.
AND SOON AFTER, AS THE GENERAL IN CHARGE REPORTS TO KING YEZDIGERD...
YOU HAVE DARED TO FAIL?
THOSE RED ROGUES HAVE ESCAPED--AND MOCKED THE MAJESTY OF TURAN!
BUT, MY KING, --I--
SILENCE! EVERY TENTH MAN AMONG THE GUARDS SHALL DIE IN THE MORNING TO BOLSTER THE COURAGE OF THE REST!
SEE THAT TWO WAR GALLEYS ARE OUTFITTED AT ONCE!
THE BARBARIANS WILL SURELY TRY TO STEAL A BOAT AND MAKE THEIR WAY ACROSS THE SEA.
SEE THAT THEY ARE OVERTAKEN--AND BROUGHT TO ME TO SUFFER THE AGONIES OF A THOUSAND DEATHS!
YES, MAJESTY!
AT THE PROSPECTS OF CONSIGNING CONAN AND HIS COMRADE TO HIS TORTURE CHAMBERS, YEZDIGERD LAUGHS A GRISLY LAUGH...
...AND THE GENERAL IS GLAD TO TAKE THAT AS AN EXCUSE TO HURRY OUT OF HIS PRESENCE.


SOME DISTANCE AWAY...
KHOSRU THE FISHERMAN PULLS WITH ALL HIS MIGHT AT HIS NETS -- PRAYING AT THE SAME TIME TO TARIM THAT THEY DO NOT BREAK.
AFTER ALL, HE HAS NOT ONLY HIS OWN FAMILY TO SUPPORT--BUT THERE ARE ALSO THE BACK-BREAKING TAXES IMPOSED BY THE KING, TO FIGHT HIS WARS IN PLACES WHOSE NAMES KHOSRU CANNOT EVEN PRONOUNCE.


BUT, NOW, SUDDENLY, THE SMALL SLOOP HEAVES AND--
ERLIK'S THRONE! A MERMAN!
S-SPARE ME--PLEASE! I HAVE DONE NO--
FEAR NOT, SAILOR--I'M NO MERMAN.
THE NEWCOMER'S BARBAROUSLY-ACCENTED HYRKANIAN REASSURES KHOSRU SOMEWHAT... BUT HE STILL TREMBLES...

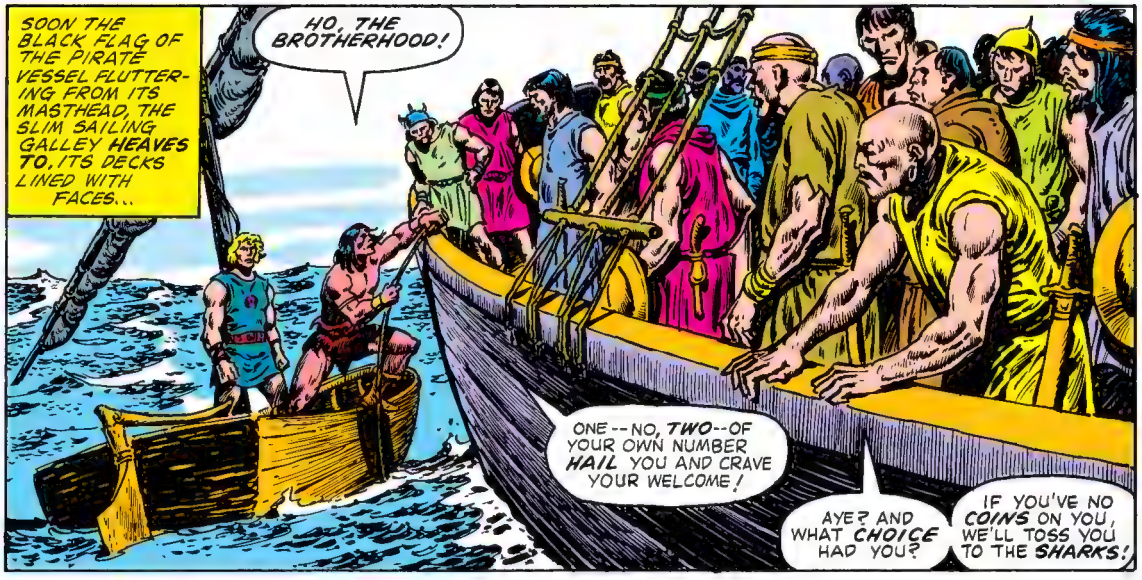

...AS TWO TALL MEN, ONE A VIRTUAL GIANT, EMERGE FROM THE SEA...
WE DON'T WANT YOUR BLOOD--ONLY YOUR SHIP!
M-MY SHIP? BUT I NEED IT, SIRES!
WITHOUT IT, HOW CAN I EAT?

HERE, FISHERMAN--PAYMENT ENOUGH AND MORE.
YOU CAN BUY TEN SUCH CRAFT AS THIS ONE WITH IT.
IS IT AGREED OR--?
AGREED, MOST GENEROUS SIRES. OH, YES--AGREED!

KHOSRU'S STRANGE CUSTOMERS LOSE NO TIME-- AND SOON, ITS SAILS BILLOWING IN THE FRESHENING BREEZE, THE TRIM CRAFT GATHERS SPEED AS IT STEERS OUT TOWARD THE EAST--

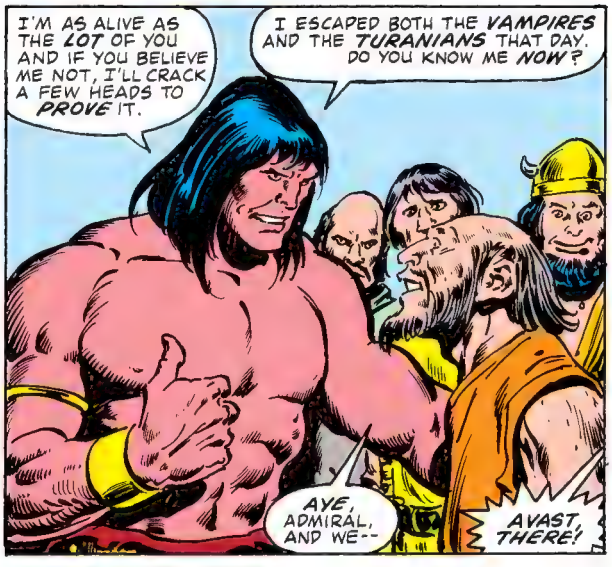
--AND ONLY THE GOLD COINS HE CLUTCHES ASSURE THE FISHERMAN THAT IT TRULY HAPPENED AT ALL...!

SOME TWENTY HOURS LATER...
EVEN AS ROLF FINISHES THE LONG TALE OF THE WANDERINGS THAT HAD LED HIM TO AGHRAPUR, CONAN THANKS THE UNHEARING GODS FOR THE STIFF BREEZE WHICH IS THE ONLY REASON THEY HAVE OUTDISTANCED ANY PURSUING GALLEYS--
...SO HERE I AM, A FUGITIVE BOTH FROM MY NATIVE AESGAARD AND NOW FROM TURAN, AS WELL.
WHY DID YOU JOIN ME, ROLF?
YOU WERE COMFORTABLY OFF AT THE TURANIAN COURT.
TRULY, CIMMERIAN--DID YOU THINK I HAD FORGOTTEN THE TIME YOU SAVED MY LIFE IN THAT BATTLE WITH THE HYPERBOREANS IN THE GRAASKAL MOUNTAINS?
SO I DID, DIDN'T I?
AFTER SO MANY BATTLES, I HAD FORGOTTEN IT MYSELF!
THAT RASCAL YEZDIGERD WILL BE HOT ON OUR HEELS. HE'LL NOT SOON FORGET HOW WE PULLED HIS BEARD.
AYE! I HOPE THIS FINE WIND KEEPS UP OR ELSE--
YOU KNOW IN MY DAYS WITH THE RED BROTHERHOOD, THIS AREA WAS THE SUREST ONE FOR A SWEEP TO CATCH A FAT MERCHANTMAN OUT FROM SULTANAPUR OR KHAWARIZM.
THIS INLAND SEA IS STILL A TURANIAN LAKE, AS THEY SAY--BUT STILL THEY'VE NEVER BEEN ABLE TO SWEEP IT CLEAR OF PIRATES.
IT'S WELL KNOWN, CONAN, HOW YOU UNITED THE RED BROTHERHOOD AND FORGED THEM INTO AN ARROW AIMED AT THE HEART OF TURAN.
WHICH HAS NO HEART!
MY NAME WAS A CURSE IN THE HARBOR OF THE VILAYET SEA IN THOSE DAYS--
--AND PERHAPS IT WILL SOON BE AGAIN.
WE HAVE COMPANY, ROLF. LOOK!
AYE, THOSE YELLOW SAILS CAN MEAN BUT ONE THING--PIRATES!
WELL, WE MIGHT AS WELL DROP OUR SAIL AND AWAIT THEM. THEY COULD OVERTAKE US SWIFTLY ENOUGH AT ANY RATE.
I HOPE SOME ABOARD HAVE LONG MEMORIES, CIMMERIAN...!

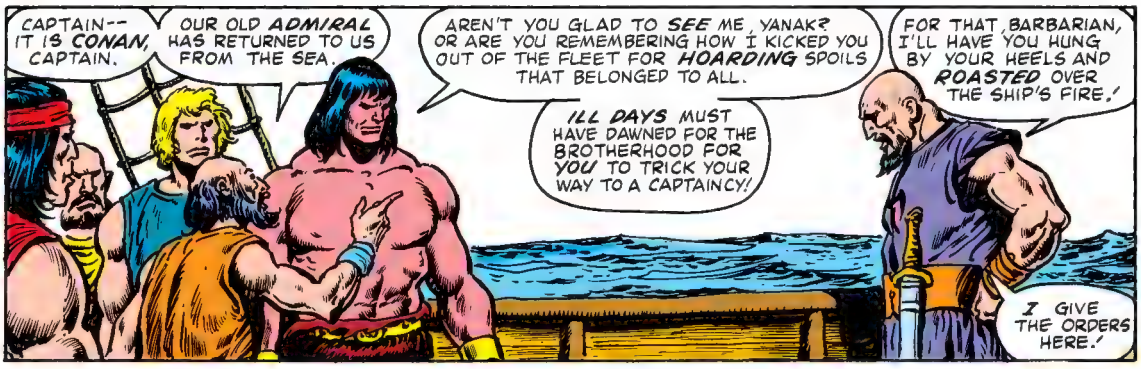

SOON THE BLACK FLAG OF THE PIRATE VESSEL FLUTTERING FROM ITS MASTHEAD, THE SLIM SAILING GALLEY HEAVES TO, ITS DECKS LINED WITH FACES...
HO, THE BROTHERHOOD!
ONE--NO, TWO--OF YOUR OWN NUMBER HAIL YOU AND CRAVE YOUR WELCOME!
AYE? AND WHAT CHOICE HAD YOU?
IF YOU'VE NO COINS ON YOU, WE'LL TOSS YOU TO THE SHARKS!

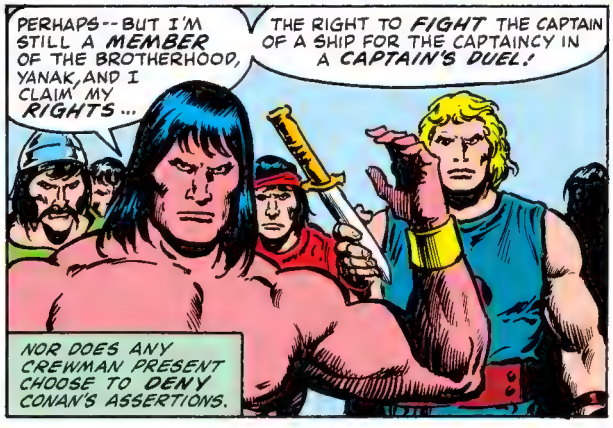
DOG -- DON'T YOU KNOW ME?
IS YOUR MEMORY SO SHORT YOU MUST BE REMINDED OF MY NAME, OR HAVE YOUR EYES GROWN DIM WITH AGE?
AN INSOLENT ONE! LET'S GUT HIM NOW AND FEED HIM PIECEMEAL TO THE FISHES!
NO--WAIT!--

A GHOST, BY TARIM! ERLIK PRESERVE US--
--IT'S OUR OLD ADMIRAL COME BACK FROM THE GRAVE TO HAUNT US!
Y-YOU PERISHED YEARS AGO--WHEN THE COLCHIAN VAMPIRES ASSAILED YOUR CREW AND THEY FLED!
IS HE THAT ONE, OF WHOM I'VE HEARD?
* "THE ROAD OF EAGLES," SAVAGE SWORD #38-- L.J.

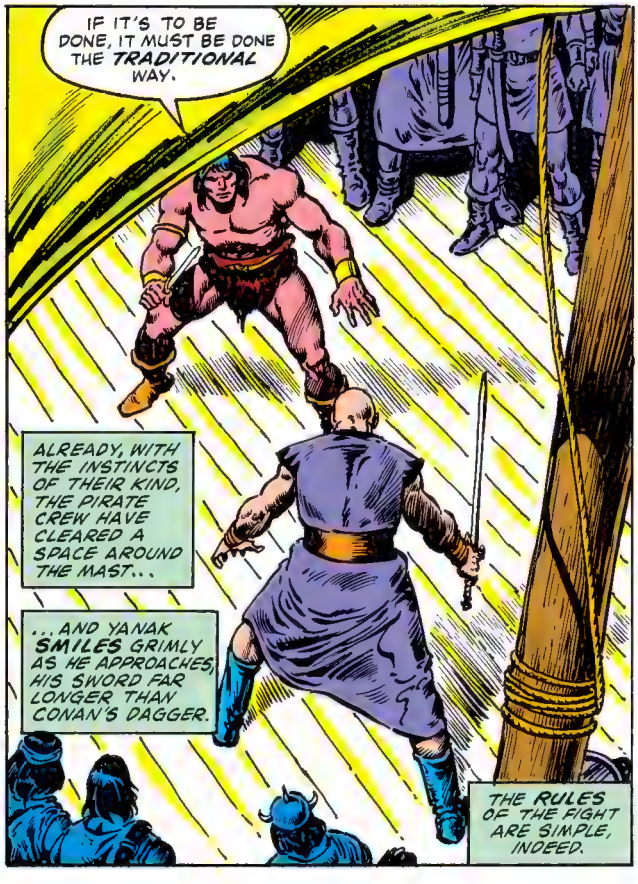

I'M AS ALIVE AS THE LOT OF YOU AND IF YOU BELIEVE ME NOT, I'LL CRACK A FEW HEADS TO PROVE IT.
I ESCAPED BOTH THE VAMPIRES AND THE TURANIANS THAT DAY. DO YOU KNOW ME NOW?
AYE, ADMIRAL, AND WE--
AVAST, THERE!

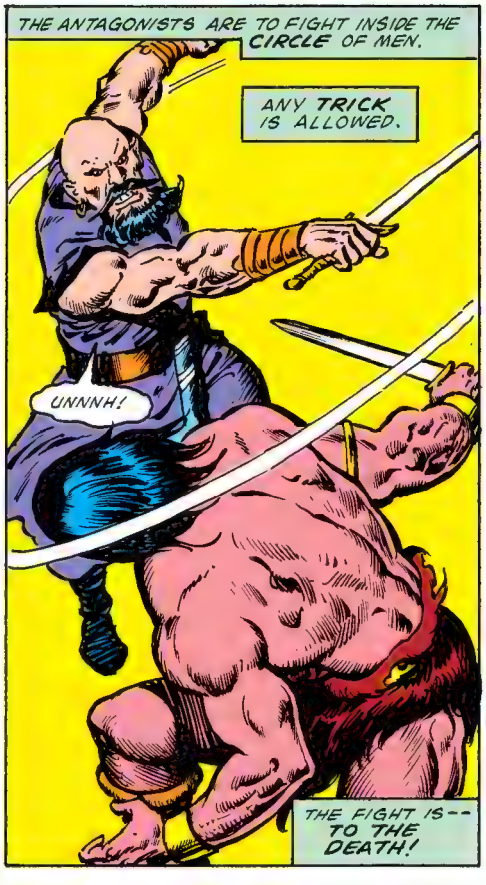
WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO ARE THESE DOGS?
I TOLD YOU TO FETCH THEM TO ME AS SOON AS THEY WERE PICKED UP, OR BY THE GODS, I'D--


CAPTAIN-- IT IS CONAN, CAPTAIN.
OUR OLD ADMIRAL HAS RETURNED TO US FROM THE SEA.
AREN'T YOU GLAD TO SEE ME, YANAK? OR ARE YOU REMEMBERING HOW I KICKED YOU OUT OF THE FLEET FOR HOARDING SPOILS THAT BELONGED TO ALL.
ILL DAYS MUST HAVE DAWNED FOR THE BROTHERHOOD FOR YOU TO TRICK YOUR WAY TO A CAPTAINCY!
FOR THAT, BARBARIAN, I'LL HAVE YOU HUNG BY YOUR HEELS AND ROASTED OVER THE SHIP'S FIRE.!
I GIVE THE ORDERS HERE.!

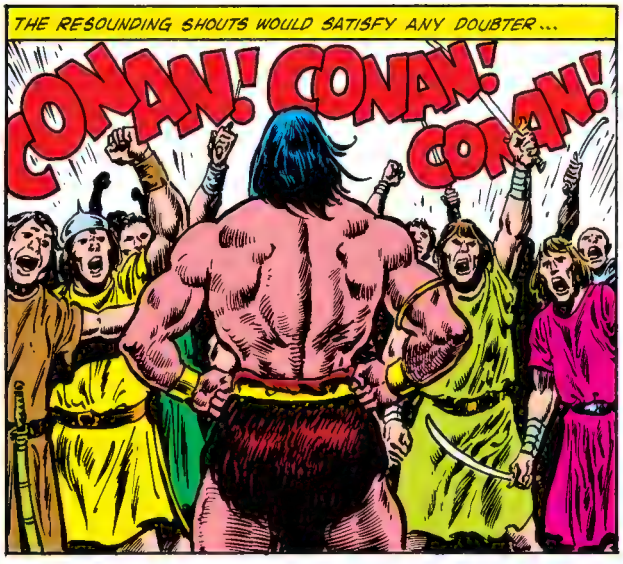

PERHAPS--BUT I'M STILL A MEMBER OF THE BROTHERHOOD, YANAK, AND I CLAIM MY RIGHTS...
THE RIGHT TO FIGHT THE CAPTAIN OF A SHIP FOR THE CAPTAINCY IN A CAPTAIN'S DUEL!
NOR DOES ANY CREWMAN PRESENT CHOOSE TO DENY CONAN'S ASSERTIONS.

THIS IS MADNESS, ADMIRAL.! YANAK WILL CUT YOU TO PIECES!
NO, ARTUS... THAT WOULD SPLIT THE CREW IN TWO.!
ALL YOUR OLD FOLLOWERS ARE WITH YOU.! WE'LL DEPOSE HIM AND--


IF IT'S TO BE DONE, IT MUST BE DONE THE TRADITIONAL WAY.
ALREADY, WITH THE INSTINCTS OF THEIR KIND, THE PIRATE CREW HAVE CLEARED A SPACE AROUND THE MAST...
...AND YANAK SMILES GRIMLY AS HE APPROACHES, HIS SWORD FAR LONGER THAN CONAN'S DAGGER.
THE RULES OF THE FIGHT ARE SIMPLE, INDEED.


THE ANTAGONISTS ARE TO FIGHT INSIDE THE CIRCLE OF MEN.
ANY TRICK IS ALLOWED.
UNNNH!
THE FIGHT IS-- TO THE DEATH!

--UNLESS ONE OF THE DUELISTS IS SO BADLY HURT HE CANNOT GO ON.
IN THAT CASE, HE WILL SIMPLY BE FLUNG OVERBOARD ANYWAY.
STAND STILL AND FIGHT, DOG!
I'LL FIGHT, ALL RIGHT, YANAK--
--BUT NOT STANDING STILL!
AAAAAA
GGKKKKGG--!
NOW, LADS--
--WHO IS CAPTAIN OF THIS TUB?


THE RESOUNDING SHOUTS WOULD SATISFY ANY DOUBTER...
CONAN! CONAN!
CONAN!

THEN TO THE SAILS AND OARS, LUBBERS-- AND A MAN TO THE MASTHEAD AS LOOKOUT!
I HAVE YEZDIGERD HIMSELF HOT ON MY TRAIL --
--BUT WE'LL LEAD HIM A MERRY CHASE, BY CROM!

SOON, THE PIRATE CRAFT SAILS SOUTHEASTWARD, HER CANVAS SPREAD BEFORE THE BREEZE, AS MEN HAUL AT LINES, VOICING LUSTY SEA SONGS...
... SO YOU THINK I'M MAD, ARTUS?
AS MITRA IS MY WITNESS, I HOPE YEZDIGERD THINKS SO, TOO!
NO, NOT MAD, CONAN. I KNOW YOU TOO WELL.
BUT, TO DASH STRAIGHT INTO THE JAWS OF THE TURANIAN THIS WAY--!

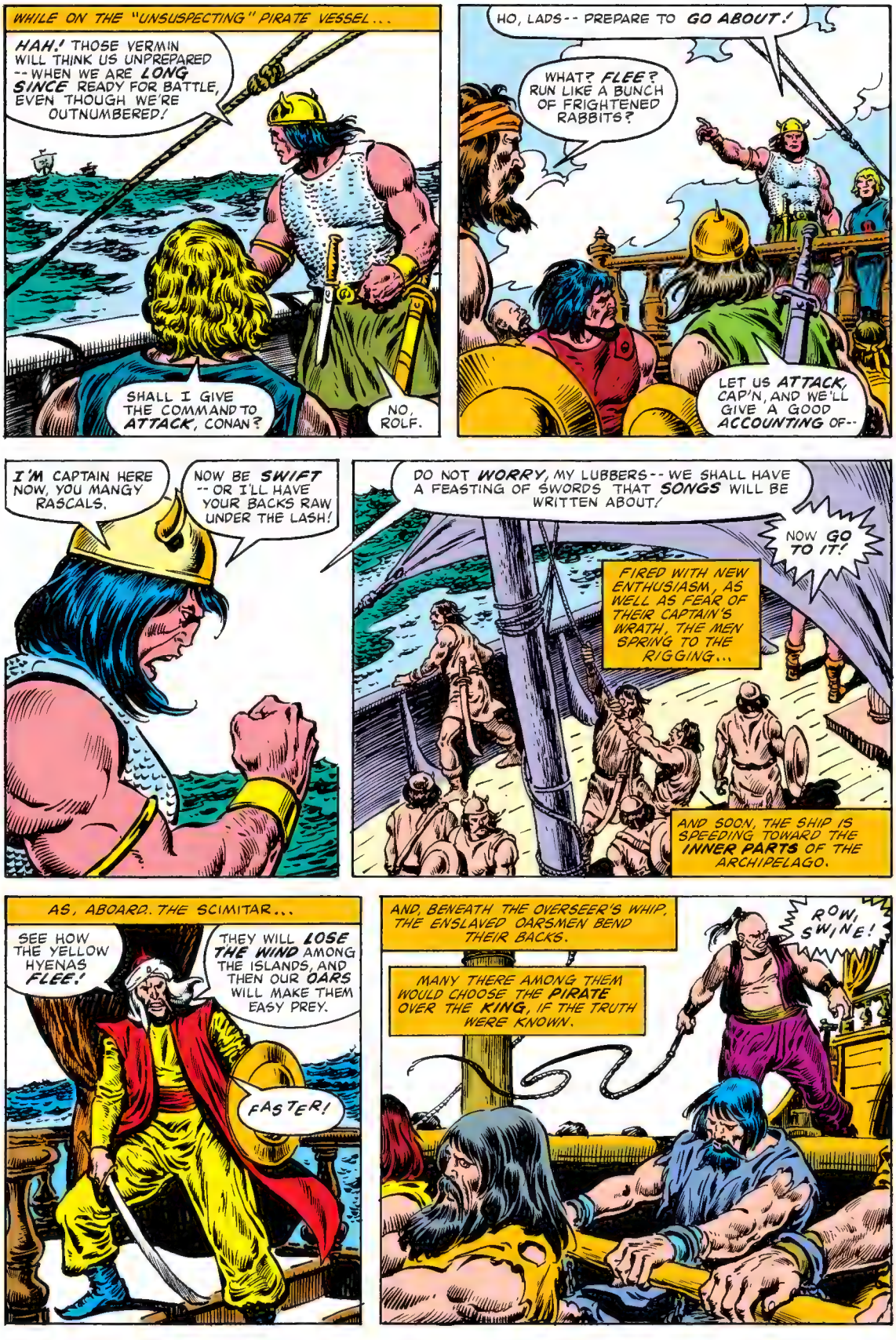
LOOK YOU, SHIPMASTER! YEZDIGERD HAS BEEN FOUR DAYS ON HIS WAY FROM AGHRAPUR... AND SHOULD BE SOMEWHERE IN THIS AREA.
WE SHOULD RENDEZVOUS WITH YEZDIGERD SOMEWHERE OFF THE ZHURAZI ARCHIPELAGO.

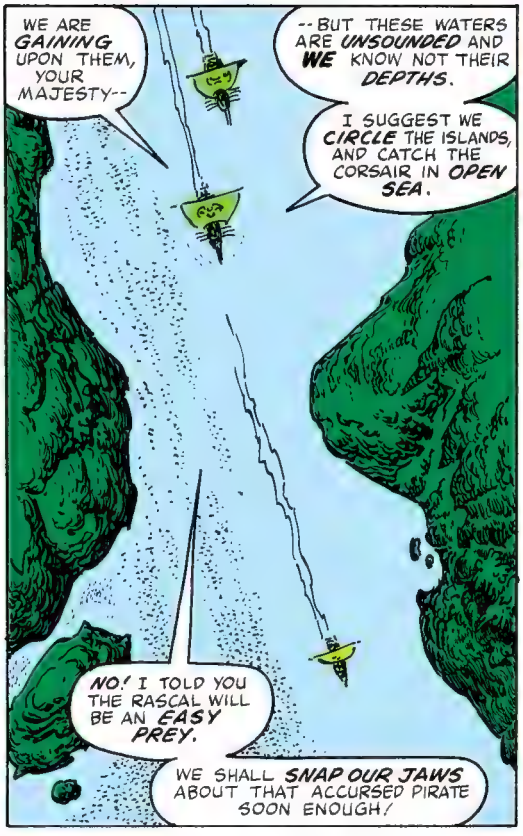
THE ZHURAZI, ADMIRAL? THOSE ARE DANGEROUS WATERS-- WITH NO SOUNDINGS ON THE CHARTS.
THAT CURSED CLUSTER OF ISLANDS IS SHUNNED BY MEN.
SOME SAY IT IS HAUNTED BY DEMONS AND THAT YOU ARE LOST IF YOU SET FOOT ON ITS SHORES.

LOST, HELL! I ONCE LIVED ON THE NORTH MAIN ISLAND FOR A FORTNIGHT AFTER A SHIPWRECK.
THERE WAS A TRIBE OF EASTERN SAVAGES DWELLING AMONG THE CRAGS...
...AND I HAD THE DEVIL OF A TIME STOPPING THEM FROM SACRIFICING ME TO THEIR LIZARD-GOD.

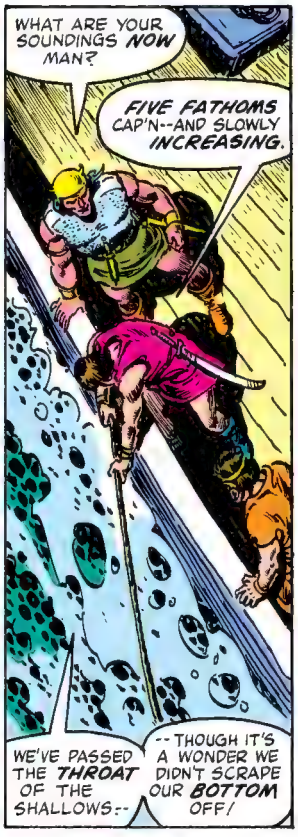
AS YOU SAY, ARTUS-- THERE ARE NO SOUNDINGS ON THIS CHART, WHICH IS THE VERY MAP OUR BLOODTHIRSTY PURSUER WILL HAVE.
THAT IS OUR ADVANTAGE, MY FRIEND!
HE DOES NOT DEIGN TO ELABORATE.

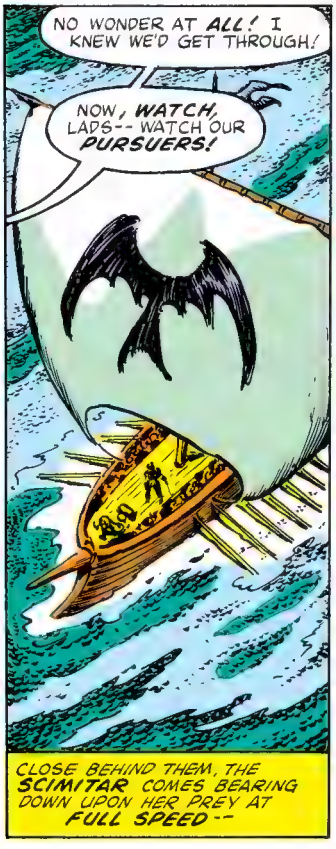
LATER, ELSEWHERE ON THE SEA OF VILAYET...
OAR-BLADES RISE AND FALL IN STEADY RHYTHM, SPEEDING THE WAR VESSELS OF KING YEZDIGERD OVER THE WAVES.
THE SLAVES OF TURANIAN SHIPS ARE ALWAYS CRUELLY DRIVEN AND NONE SO CRUELLY AS THOSE IN THE KING'S OWN FLAGSHIP, THE SCIMITAR.
I TELL YOU, WOMAN, EVIL POWERS AID THAT CIMMERIAN DEVIL!
HE MUST HAVE MANAGED TO STEAL A BOAT IMMEDIATELY UPON HIS ESCAPE, WHILE MY CURSED ADMIRALS NEED HALF A DAY TO PUT MY FLAGSHIP TO SEA.
EVEN THE WIND IS AGAINST US, SO THAT WE MUST ROW--THUS WE MOVE LIKE SNAILS!
STILL, THAT IS BETTER THAN THE BARBARIAN CAN DO, MY LORD.
HIS PUNY OARS WILL AVAIL HIM LITTLE IN THIS WIND, AND HIS HEAD START VANISHES, MOMENT BY MOMENT.
PATIENCE, MY LORD. ERLIK WILL DELIVER THE FOOL INTO OUR HANDS.
SO MY HENCHMEN HAVE OFTEN MISTAKENLY THOUGHT--WHICH IS WHY I HAVE PERSONALLY JOINED THIS FINAL EXPEDITION!
BY THE BEARD OF MY FATHER YILDIZ, WHO ONCE HAD THE DOG AS HIS PERSONAL BODYGUARD--THERE WILL BE A RECKONING!
YES, MY KING... MY OWN INSTINCTS TELL ME THAT YOU ARE RIGHT.
THE SCORE BETWEEN YOU AND CONAN IS LONG... BUT SOON IT WILL BE SETTLED, ONCE AND FOR ALL.
UTHGHIZ--I SEE LAND!
HAVE WE VEERED FROM OUR COURSE?
THAT, MY LORD, IS THE ZHURAZI ARCHIPELAGO.
THESE ARE UNKNOWN WATERS BUT I INTEND TO SCAN THE COAST FOR SIGNS OF HIS BOAT, AND--
LOOK, MY LORD! YONDER IS A PRIZE FOR YOUR SHIPS!
A PIRATE! WE HAVE SURPRISED THEM!

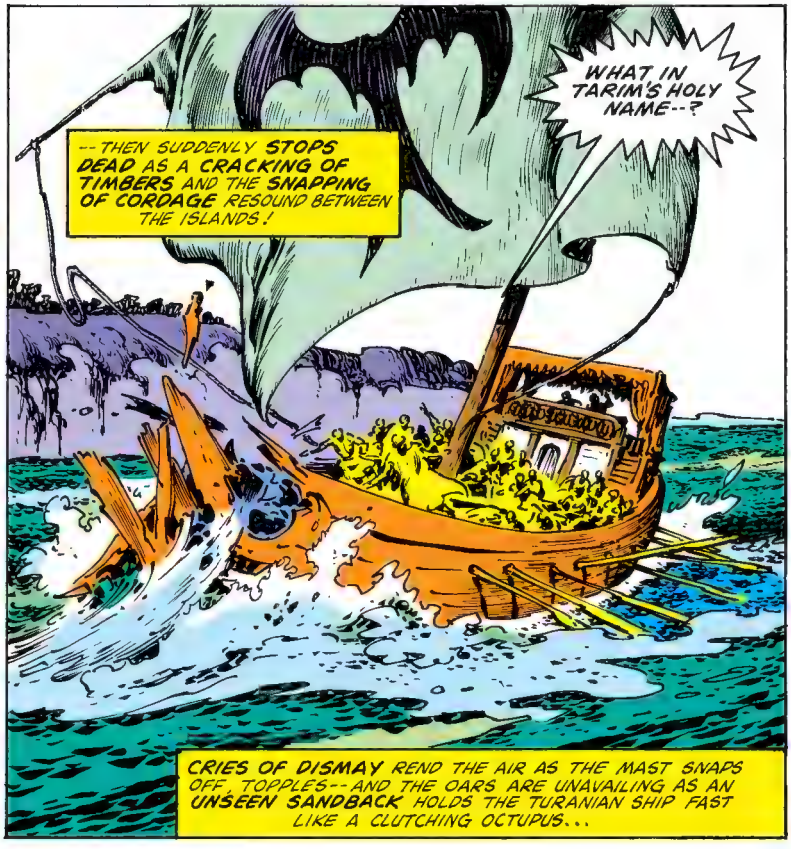

WHILE ON THE "UNSUSPECTING" PIRATE VESSEL...
HAH! THOSE VERMIN WILL THINK US UNPREPARED --WHEN WE ARE LONG SINCE READY FOR BATTLE, EVEN THOUGH WE'RE OUTNUMBERED!
SHALL I GIVE THE COMMAND TO ATTACK, CONAN?
NO, ROLF.
HO, LADS-- PREPARE TO GO ABOUT!
WHAT? FLEE? RUN LIKE A BUNCH OF FRIGHTENED RABBITS?
LET US ATTACK, CAP'N, AND WE'LL GIVE A GOOD ACCOUNTING OF--
I'M CAPTAIN HERE NOW, YOU MANGY RASCALS.
NOW BE SWIFT -- OR I'LL HAVE YOUR BACKS RAW UNDER THE LASH!
DO NOT WORRY, MY LUBBERS-- WE SHALL HAVE A FEASTING OF SWORDS THAT SONGS WILL BE WRITTEN ABOUT!
NOW GO TO IT!
FIRED WITH NEW ENTHUSIASM, AS WELL AS FEAR OF THEIR CAPTAIN'S WRATH, THE MEN SPRING TO THE RIGGING...
AND SOON, THE SHIP IS SPEEDING TOWARD THE INNER PARTS OF THE ARCHIPELAGO.
AS, ABOARD THE SCIMITAR...
SEE HOW THE YELLOW HYENAS FLEE!
THEY WILL LOSE THE WIND AMONG THE ISLANDS, AND THEN OUR OARS WILL MAKE THEM EASY PREY.
FASTER!
AND, BENEATH THE OVERSEER'S WHIP, THE ENSLAVED OARSMEN BEND THEIR BACKS.
MANY THERE AMONG THEM WOULD CHOOSE THE PIRATE OVER THE KING, IF THE TRUTH WERE KNOWN.
ROW, SWINE!

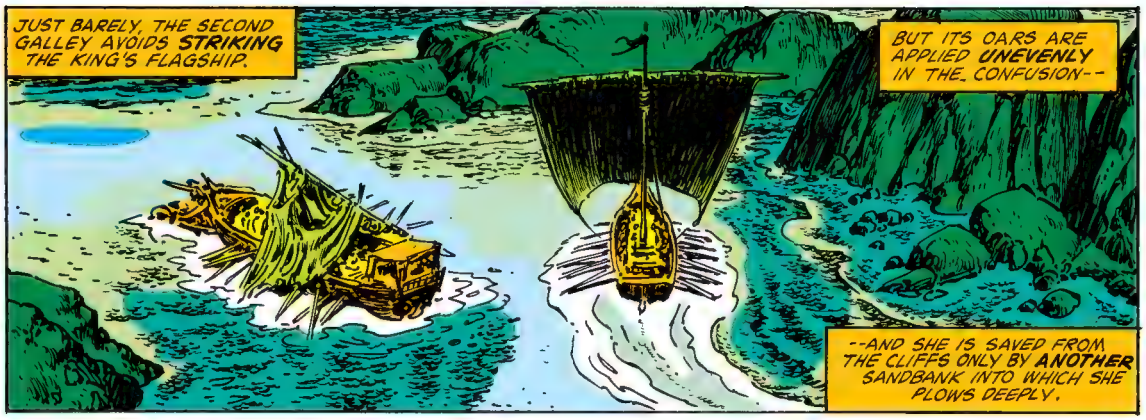

WE ARE GAINING UPON THEM, YOUR MAJESTY--
--BUT THESE WATERS ARE UNSOUNDED AND WE KNOW NOT THEIR DEPTHS.
I SUGGEST WE CIRCLE THE ISLANDS, AND CATCH THE CORSAIR IN OPEN SEA.
NO! I TOLD YOU THE RASCAL WILL BE AN EASY PREY.
WE SHALL SNAP OUR JAWS ABOUT THAT ACCURSED PIRATE SOON ENOUGH!

AND, ABOARD THEIR OWN VESSEL, THE BARACHANS GLOWER FEARFULLY AS YEZDIGERD'S CRAFT COMES CLOSER MOMENT BY PRECIOUS MOMENT.
IS OUR CAPTAIN MAD?
THE HYRKANIAN RAMS WILL SOON SPLINTER US LIKE AN EGGSHELL
IF WE DON'T GO ASHORE AND FLEE INTO THE JUNGLE, WE'RE DOOMED!


WHAT ARE YOUR SOUNDINGS NOW MAN?
FIVE FATHOMS CAP'N--AND SLOWLY INCREASING.
WE'VE PASSED THE THROAT OF THE SHALLOWS--
--THOUGH IT'S A WONDER WE DIDN'T SCRAPE OUR BOTTOM OFF!


NO WONDER AT ALL! I KNEW WE'D GET THROUGH!
NOW, WATCH, LADS-- WATCH OUR PURSUERS!
CLOSE BEHIND THEM, THE SCIMITAR COMES BEARING DOWN UPON HER PREY AT FULL SPEED--


WHAT IN TARIM'S HOLY NAME--?
--THEN SUDDENLY STOPS DEAD AS A CRACKING OF TIMBERS AND THE SNAPPING OF CORDAGE RESOUND BETWEEN THE ISLANDS!
CRIES OF DISMAY REND THE AIR AS THE MAST SNAPS OFF, TOPPLES--AND THE OARS ARE UNAVAILING AS AN UNSEEN SANDBACK HOLDS THE TURANIAN SHIP FAST LIKE A CLUTCHING OCTUPUS...

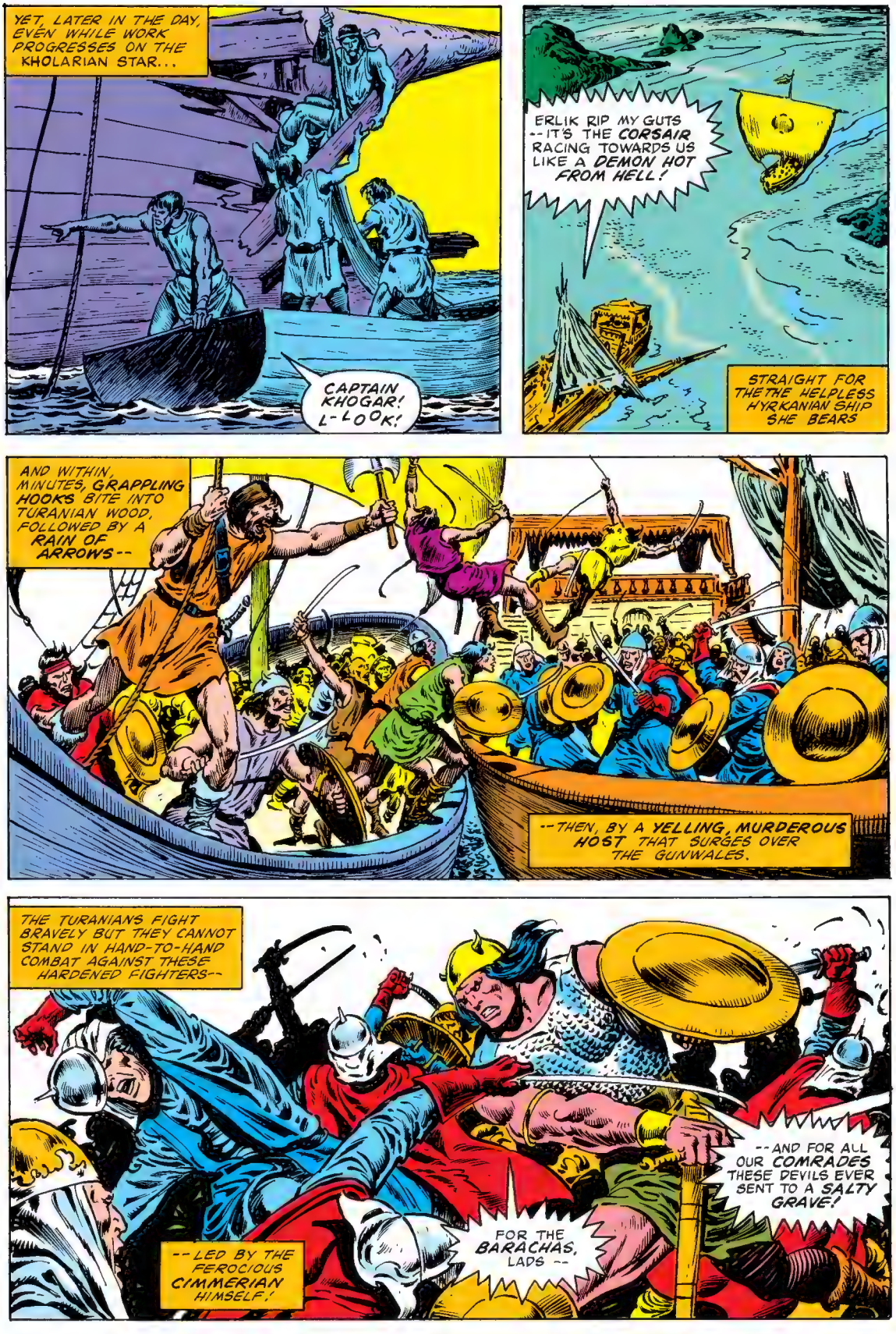

JUST BARELY, THE SECOND GALLEY AVOIDS STRIKING THE KING'S FLAGSHIP.
BUT ITS OARS ARE APPLIED UNEVENLY IN THE CONFUSION--
--AND SHE IS SAVED FROM THE CLIFFS ONLY BY ANOTHER SANDBANK INTO WHICH SHE PLOWS DEEPLY.

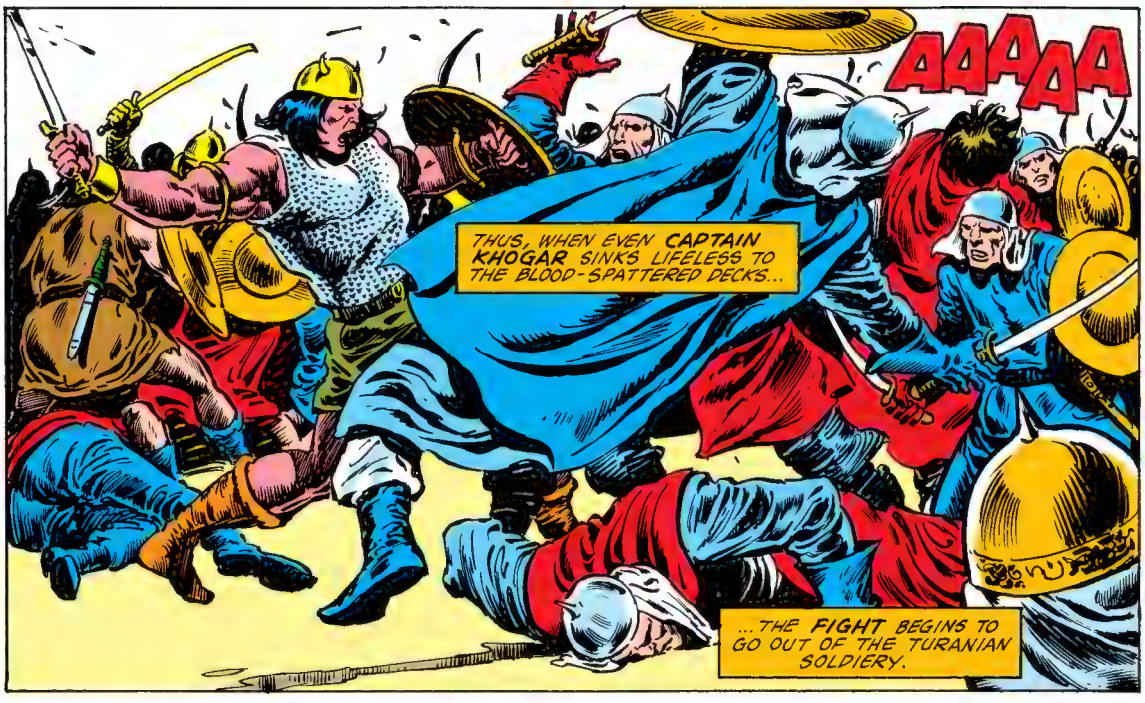
BY THE GODS! WE'LL BE DAYS GETTING THE CRAFT AFLOAT AGAIN!
AND SO ENDS THE PURSUIT WHICH, FOR THE TURANIANS AND THEIR DESPOT, HAD BEGUN SO HAPPILY...

HAH! WE SHOULD'VE KNOWN OUR CAPTAIN WOULD DO IT, LADS.
THE BIGGER ONE WILL DOUBTLESS NEVER SAIL AGAIN!
WHERE TO NOW, CAPTAIN? TO KHORAF PERHAPS, WHERE THE SLAVERS PUT IN,OR--?

WE HAVE TURANIAN SHIPS HERE, MY FRIENDS!
WE HAVE NOT ESCAPED YEZDIGERD -- WE HAVE CAUGHT HIM IN A TRAP!
I PROMISED YOU A FEASTING OF SWORDS AND YOU SHALL HAVE IT.
THE WIND FRESHENS -- SO SET A COURSE TO ROUND THE LARBOARD ISLAND!

AND AS THE CORSAIR CREW EAGERLY COMPLY--ABOARD THE GROUNDED FLAGSHIP...
I WILL HUNT THAT DOG--TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!
THE WHOLE THING SMACKS OF THAT DEVIL CONAN! I'LL WARRANT HE'S ABOARD.
WILL KHOGAR NEVER GET HIS CURSED TUB AFLOAT?! FOR THIS ONE'S FINISHED!


YET, LATER IN THE DAY, EVEN WHILE WORK PROGRESSES ON THE KHOLARIAN STAR...
CAPTAIN KHOGAR! L-LOOK!
ERLIK RIP MY GUTS --IT'S THE CORSAIR RACING TOWARDS US LIKE A DEMON HOT FROM HELL!
STRAIGHT FOR THETHE HELPLESS HYRKANIAN SHIP SHE BEARS
AND WITHIN, MINUTES, GRAPPLING HOOKS BITE INTO TURANIAN WOOD, FOLLOWED BY A RAIN OF ARROWS--
--THEN, BY A YELLING, MURDEROUS HOST THAT SURGES OVER THE GUNWALES.
THE TURANIANS FIGHT BRAVELY BUT THEY CANNOT STAND IN HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT AGAINST THESE HARDENED FIGHTERS--
--LED BY THE FEROCIOUS CIMMERIAN HIMSELF!
FOR THE BARACHAS, LADS --
--AND FOR ALL OUR COMRADES THESE DEVILS EVER SENT TO A SALTY GRAVE!


AAAAA
THUS, WHEN EVEN CAPTAIN KHOGAR SINKS LIFELESS TO THE BLOOD-SPATTERED DECKS...
...THE FIGHT BEGINS TO GO OUT OF THE TURANIAN SOLDIERY.

MEANWHILE, SEVERAL OF THE PIRATE CREW HAVE ALREADY DISPOSED OF THE TASKMASTER AND HELPED THEMSELVES TO HIS CLANKING KEYS.

AND, WHEN THE HATED, RUSTY FETTERS ARE REMOVED FROM THE ANKLES OF THESE SLAVES OF MANY NATIONS, MANY SHIPS--

--THE SCALES TIP FINALLY IN THE PIRATES' FAVOR.

THEN--A MOMENT THAT HAS BEEN MORE THAN HALF A LIFETIME IN COMING...
PREPARE TO DIE, YEZDIGERD!
I SAW YOUR HAND IN THIS, CIMMERIAN CUR!
AND, BY ERLIK, NOW YOU SHALL REAP YOUR DESERTS!
PERHAPS SOME DAY I SHALL, DOG --
--BUT NOT BY YOUR HAND!
FOR LONG MINUTES, THE TWO STRIKE AND PARRY FURIOUSLY--
--AND PIRATES AND TURANIANS ALIKE STOP FIGHTING TO WATCH AS THE BARBARIAN-KING FORCES THE CIVILIZED MONARCH BACK, BACK.
THEN--
WELL, LADS, THAT'S A SECOND SCAR I'VE GIVEN HIM--AND ONE THAT NO POTIONS WILL SALVE.
WITH THEIR RULER'S DEATH, THE LAST OF THE TURANIANS CEASE STRUGGLING...

BUT THE PIRATES ARE LEFT FEW PRISONERS, FOR THEIR SWORDS HAVE ALREADY TAKEN TOO HEAVY A TOLL.
A BARE HALF OF THE TWO HUNDRED PIRATES STILL STAND--BUT THEY HAVE CAPTURED OR SLAIN THREE HUNDRED OF THE HYRKANIANS.
YET, EVEN AS PRISONERS ARE HERDED AND WOUNDS BOUND..
LOOK THERE--THE SKY GROWS STRANGELY DARK!
AND THERE COMES A BAT--BUT SO HUGE!
IT IS NO BAT, HOWEVER--BUT A HUGE WINGED MAN-LIKE SHAPE--
--WHICH SWOOPS TOWARD THE DECKS, UTTERING A SHRILL CRY THAT SMITES THE PIRATES' HEARTS LIKE DEATH.
SKREEEEEEE
AND AT THAT CRY, THE WOMAN THANARA STEPS FROM THE YET-UNMOLESTED CABIN.
IN THE WINK OF AN EYE, THE MONSTER HAS BORNE HER OFF, FLAPPING HEAVILY OVER THE OILY WATERS OF THE CHANNEL.
WITHIN SECONDS, BOTH ARE OUT OF SIGHT... AND THE SUN SHINES ONCE AGAIN.
MITRA! SH-SHE DIDN'T EVEN ACT AFRAID OF IT!
WH-WHAT WAS IT, CAPTAIN CONAN?
I HAVE SEEN THAT THING... BEFORE.
BUT HE DOES NOT DEIGN TO EXPLAIN THAT IT WAS SUCH A WINGED DEVIL THAT CARRIED OFF HIS BELOVED ZENOBIA...AND WHOSE EASTWARD PATH HE HAS FOLLOWED SINCE THAT NIGHT.
BURN THE GROUNDED GALLEY--AND SAIL THE OTHER, WITH HALF THE CREW, BACK TO THE BARACHAN ISLES!

HIS OLD SCORE WITH YEZDIGERD SETTLED AT LAST FOR ALL TIME, CONAN CONFERS FOR HOURS WITH ONE OF THE FREED SLAVES--A **KHITAN**, WITH WHOM HE TALKS OF FAR LANDS **BEYOND THE HIMELIAN MOUNTAINS.**

THEN, THE BIGGEST SURPRISE OF ALL :

ROLF, **YOU** ARE CAPTAIN, NOW, AND I DOUBT THAT ANY MAN WILL CHALLENGE YOUR RIGHT.

BUT--WHERE DO **YOU** GO, CONAN?

TO THE **EAST!**

HE WILL SAY NO MORE.

Weeks later, in distant Vendhya:

WEARING THE GUISE OF THE HIGH CASTE **KSHATRIYANS**, CONAN OF CIMMERIA STRIDES THROUGH THE STREETS OF THE GREAT **SUB-CONTINENT** NEXT DOOR TO THE SPRAWLING **KHITAI**...

...AND INTO A NEARLY-EMPTY TAVERN, FOR SCENTED SHIRAKAM WINE... AND A FEW ANSWERS...

HOW FARES HER ROYAL HIGHNESS, THE **DEVI YASMINA**

AH, THE DEVI RULES, AS EVER WITH A WISE AND FIRM HAND...

...EVEN THOUGH SHE HAS **NO CONSORT** TO STAND BY HER SIDE AND UPHOLD HER.

BUT THE **NOBILITY** SAY THAT THE THRONE NEEDS A MORE **WAR-LIKE** SPIRIT...

...AND IT'S EVEN WHISPERED THAT HER COUSIN, **CHENGIR KHAN**, HAS AN EYE BOTH FOR HER AND FOR HER THRONE.

AND HOW DOES **SHE** FEEL ABOUT IT?

I KNOW ONLY **RUMORS**, OF COURSE, BEING BUT A POOR TAVERNER...

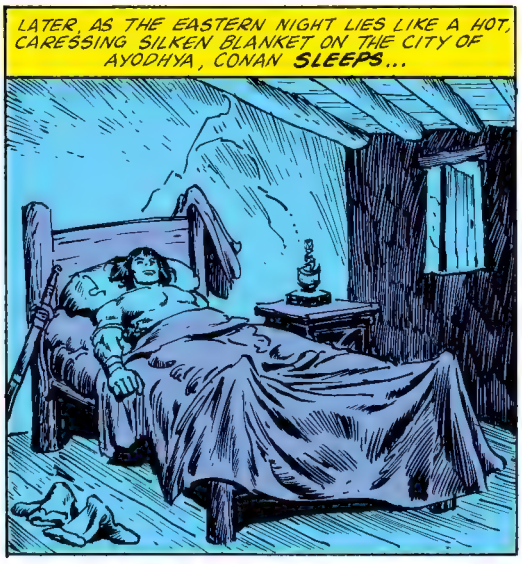
...BUT IT'S RUMORED THAT, THOUGH SHE'S REPULSED HIS WOOING SO FAR, SHE SOON WILL BE **FORCED** TO ACCEPT HIM.

THE DYNASTY MUST BE CARRIED ON... AND YASMINA MUST DO HER **DUTY** TO THE REALM.

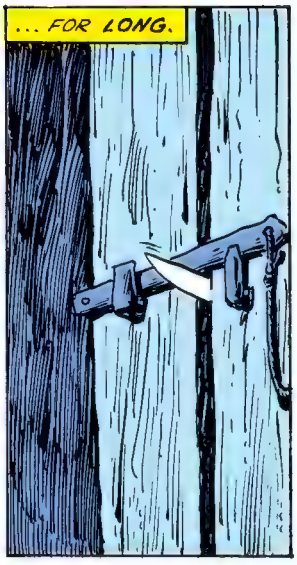
I'M **SURE** SHE WILL, BARKEEP.

NOW, HAVE YOU A **ROOM** FOR THE NIGHT?

THESE DESERT TRIPS TAKE THE **SAP** OUT OF A MAN.


LATER, AS THE EASTERN NIGHT LIES LIKE A HOT, CARESSING SILKEN BLANKET ON THE CITY OF AYODHYA, CONAN SLEEPS...

...THOUGH NOT, AS IT TURNS OUT...

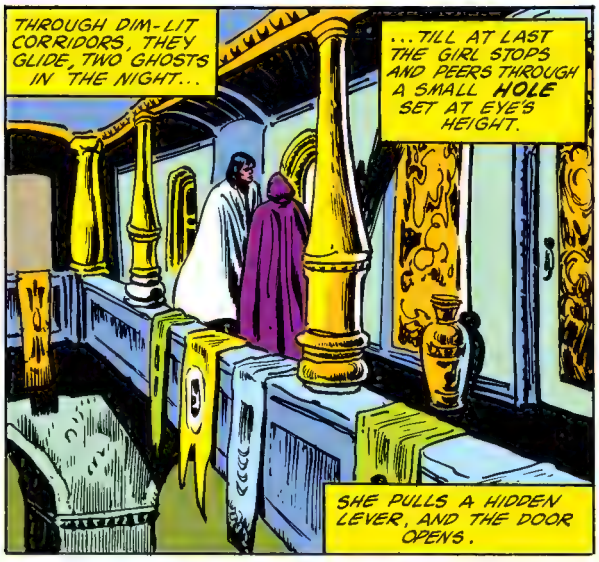

... FOR LONG.

UNNNHH-!
ALL RIGHT, YOU--

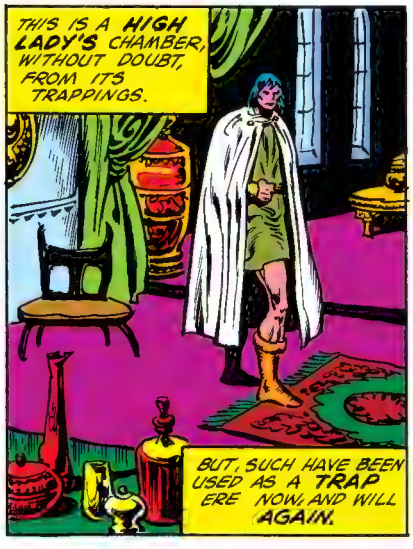
WHY ARE YOU HERE IN MY ROOM?
TALK, YOU-- BUT HUSH YOUR VOICE!
I--I CAME TO FETCH YOU FOR MY MISTRESS...

SHE HAS LEARNED OF YOUR COMING, AND IS ANXIOUS TO SEE YOU.
NOT SO FAST, WENCH...!
DON YOUR CLOTHES AND WE WILL BE ON OUR WAY. H-HURRY, I BEG YOU.

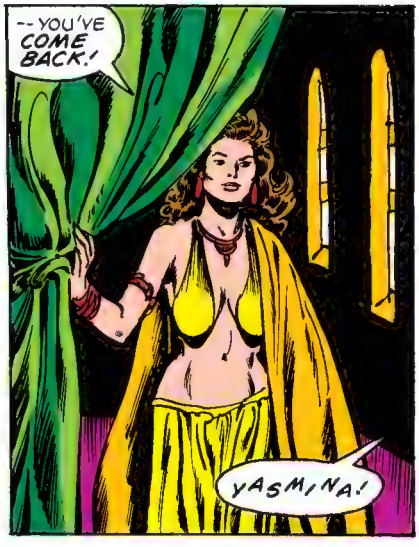
WHO IS YOUR MISTRESS? AND WHY DOES SHE SEND YOU TO ME LIKE A SKULKING THIEF?
I--I DARE NOT SAY WHO SHE IS, BUT SHE BADE ME SAY THIS...
"THE GALZAI GIRL OF MOUNT YISHMA WOULD REPAY CONAN OF GHOR FOR THE CLOTHES HE ONCE GAVE HER!"
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAY THAT IN THE FIRST PLACE, GIRL!
LET'S GO!
"MOUNT YISHMA!" THE MESSENGER MAIDEN HAS SAID--AND SET THE CIMMERIAN'S PULSE RACING...
...AS HIS THOUGHTS WANDER BACK THIRTEEN YEARS, TO THE MOMENTOUS DAYS WHEN HE ASSAULTED THE EVIL WIZARDS OF THE BLACK CIRCLE, AS THE WAR-CHIEF OF THE HILL-MEN...
...AND TO HOW HE ONCE ACQUIRED SOME GARMENTS FROM A GALAZAI HILL-GIRL...
...FOR YASMINA, DEVI OF MIGHTY VENDHYA!
SO YOUR MISTRESS IS THE DEVI HERSELF, EH?
AYE, MY LORD...
THAT IS WHY WE TOOK SUCH A DEVIOUS ROUTE HERE, FOR MY MISTRESS HAS ENEMIES.
NOW, I BUT PRESS TWO PLACES IN THIS SECTION OF THE PALACE WALL AT THE SAME TIME...
...AND I SHALL TAKE YOU TO HER.
IMPRESSIVE! BUT WHY DIDN'T THE DEVI HAVE ME COME IN THE FRONT WAY?
BECAUSE YOU, CONAN OF GHOR, HAVE EVEN MORE FOES IN VENDHYA THAN SHE.
SHE SAID SHE DID NOT WISH TO SEE YOU TORN IN TWAIN BETWEEN WILD ELEPHANTS.
YOUR MISTRESS HAS A POINT.

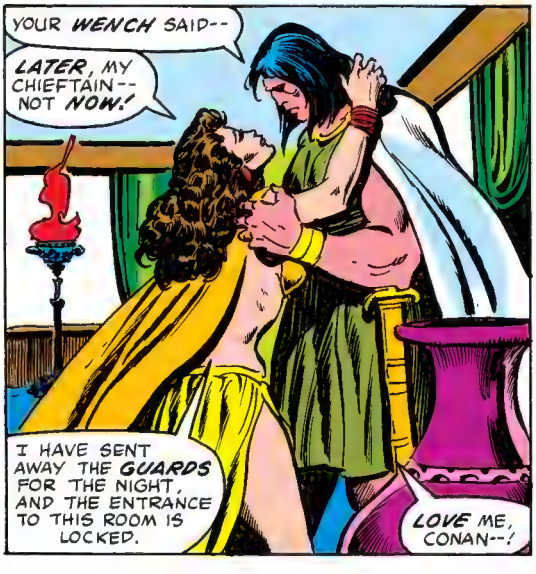

THROUGH DIM-LIT CORRIDORS, THEY GLIDE, TWO GHOSTS IN THE NIGHT...
...TILL AT LAST THE GIRL STOPS AND PEERS THROUGH A SMALL HOLE SET AT EYE'S HEIGHT.
SHE PULLS A HIDDEN LEVER, AND THE DOOR OPENS.

WAIT HERE, MY LORD... AND I WILL TELL MY MISTRESS THAT YOU ARE HERE.
YET AS THE GIRL LEAVES THE ROOM, CONAN GROWS APPREHENSIVE... AND KEEPS HIS HAND NEAR HIS SWORD.

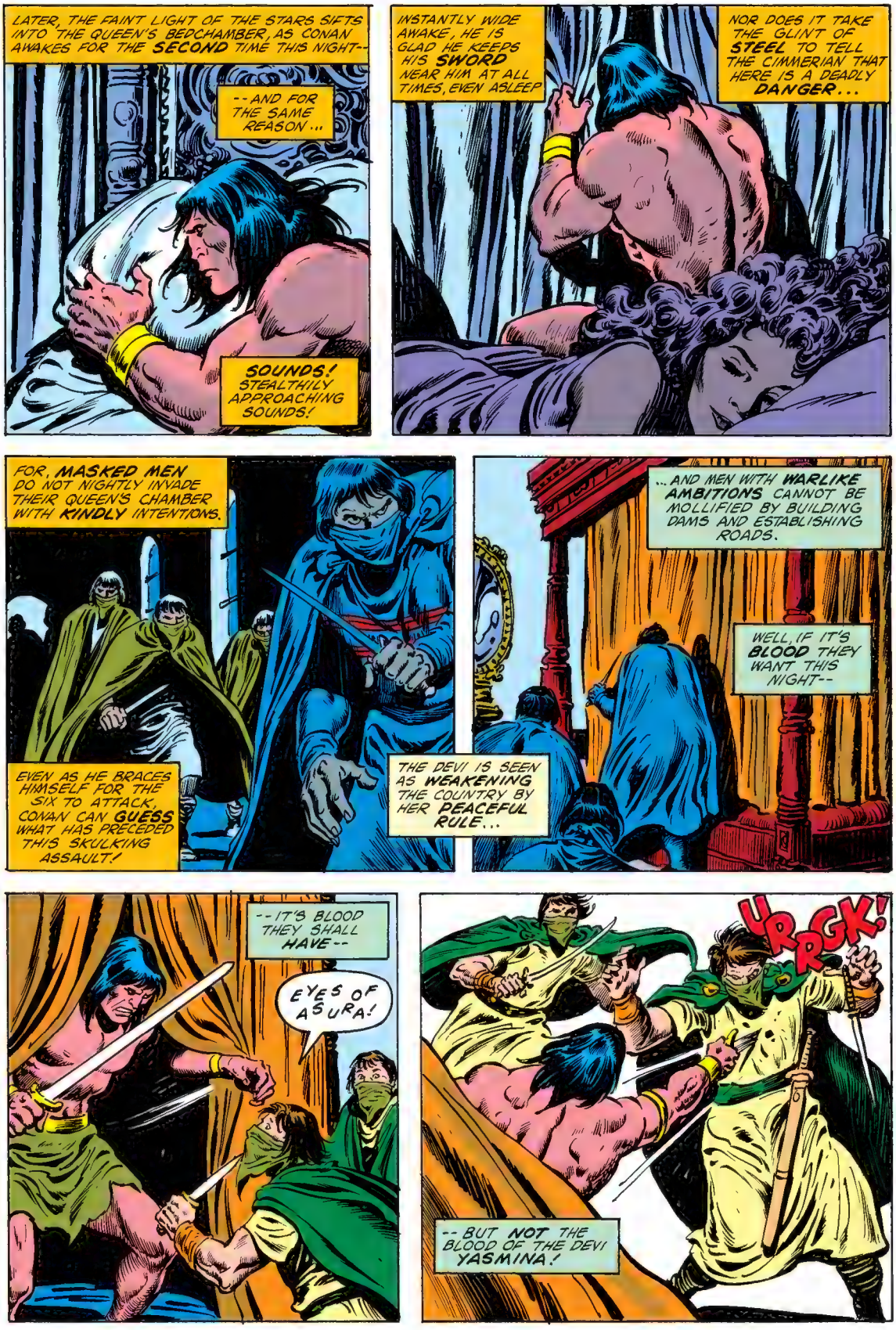

THIS IS A HIGH LADY'S CHAMBER, WITHOUT DOUBT, FROM ITS TRAPPINGS.
BUT, SUCH HAVE BEEN USED AS A TRAP ERE NOW, AND WILL AGAIN.

THEN A SOUND AT HIS BACK MAKES HIM WHEEL...
MY HILL CHIEFTAIN--


--YOU'VE COME BACK!
YASMINA!


YOUR WENCH SAID--
LATER, MY CHIEFTAIN-- NOT NOW!
I HAVE SENT AWAY THE GUARDS FOR THE NIGHT, AND THE ENTRANCE TO THIS ROOM IS LOCKED.
LOVE ME, CONAN--!

FOR THIRTEEN YEARS, I HAVE LONGED FOR THE FEEL OF YOUR ARMS AROUND ME-- NOR HAVE I BEEN HAPPY A SINGLE MOMENT SINCE WE PARTED AFTER THE BATTLE IN FEMESH VALLEY.
HOLD ME IN YOUR ARMS--AND LET THIS BE A NIGHT THAT NEITHER OF US SHALL EVER FORGET!
AND IT IS.


LATER, THE FAINT LIGHT OF THE STARS SIFTS INTO THE QUEEN'S BEDCHAMBER, AS CONAN AWAKES FOR THE SECOND TIME THIS NIGHT--
--AND FOR THE SAME REASON...
SOUNDS! STEALTHILY APPROACHING SOUNDS!
INSTANTLY WIDE AWAKE, HE IS GLAD HE KEEPS HIS SWORD NEAR HIM AT ALL TIMES, EVEN ASLEEP
NOR DOES IT TAKE THE GLINT OF STEEL TO TELL THE CIMMERIAN THAT HERE IS A DEADLY DANGER...
FOR, MASKED MEN DO NOT NIGHTLY INVADE THEIR QUEEN'S CHAMBER WITH KINDLY INTENTIONS.
EVEN AS HE BRACES HIMSELF FOR THE SIX TO ATTACK, CONAN CAN GUESS WHAT HAS PRECEDED THIS SKULKING ASSAULT!
THE DEVI IS SEEN AS WEAKENING THE COUNTRY BY HER PEACEFUL RULE...
...AND MEN WITH WARLIKE AMBITIONS CANNOT BE MOLLIFIED BY BUILDING DAMS AND ESTABLISHING ROADS.
WELL, IF IT'S BLOOD THEY WANT THIS NIGHT--
--IT'S BLOOD THEY SHALL HAVE--
EYES OF ASURA!
URRGK!
--BUT NOT THE BLOOD OF THE DEVI YASMINA!

MURDER A WOMAN SLEEPING IN HER BED, WILL YOU, CURS?
AAAAA
COWARDS! JACKALS! ANY TREACHEROUS STYGIAN IS A FAIR FIGHTER COMPARED TO YOU!
HERE, DOG! YOU WANTED A CORPSE, DIDN'T YOU?
MMMFF!
WHO ARE YOU? JOIN US IN OUR CAUSE, OR--
THE VENDHYAN'S NOBLY-ACCENTED WORDS NEVER COMPLETE THEIR SENTENCE AS CONAN'S SWORD SWEEPS THE ROOM LIKE A SCYTHE--
AIEEE
--TILL THE FIFTH OF THE MASKED WOULD-BE ASSASINS FALLS TO THE FLOOR CHOKING ON HIS OWN GORE.
URRGG
ONLY THE ONE INTO WHOM HE SLAMMED THE CORPSE REMAINS ALIVE NOW--AND HE WOULD MEET HIS FATE IN AN INSTANT--
--BUT FOR A SMEAR OF SLIPPERY CRIMSON!
WHAT?
THE LAST OF THE VENDHYAN ASSASSINS SPRINGS FORWARD, AN UNHOLY GLEAM IN HIS DARK EYES--HIS CURVED SWORD RAISED ABOVE THE FELLED CIMMERIAN--
YOU'LL NEVER RISE AGAIN, YOU NAMELESS DOG!

THEN, LIKE A DART FROM THE HAND OF A WATCHING GOD...
GGAPAA
YASMINA!
LUCKY FOR ME YOU WERE QUICK WITH YOUR STICKER, GIRL-- AND ACCURATE, TOO!
I'VE NOT FORGOTTEN MY DAYS WITH YOU IN THE HILLS, CONAN.
BUT LET'S SEE WHO--!
CHENGIR-- MY OWN COUSIN! I SHOULD HAVE GUESSED, BUT--
OH, BLACK TREACHERY, AND MADNESS FOR POWER! HEADS SHALL ROLL FOR THIS TOMORROW!
OH, CONAN--I KNOW NOW THAT I NEED A CONSORT!
YOU... DO ME A GREAT HONOR LASS.
RULE VENDHYA, WITH ME! TOMORROW WE'LL ANNOUNCE OUR BETROTHAL AND--
BUT I GUESS I FORGOT TO MENTION, IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT...
I'M ALREADY MARRIED... AND SEARCHING FOR MY CAPTURED QUEEN!
TOMORROW, I MUST RIDE FOR THE HIMELIAN MOUNTAINS.
SO BE IT! TOMORROW, THEN ... YOU GO!
BUT... IT IS STILL MANY HOURS ...TILL DAWN...!
... BUT JUDGE NOT YOUR FATHER TOO HARSHLY, YOUNG PRINCE.
HE LOVES YOUR MOTHER... LOVES HER STILL...
YET HE IS, AFTER ALL ...A MAN.
AND CONN, WITHIN HIS VERY YOUNG HEART WHICH IS STILL YEARS FROM UNDERSTANDING, DOES FORGIVE.
IT IS CONAN, RATHER WHO HAS NEVER QUITE FORGIVEN HIMSELF...
... THOUGH YASMINA, CROM BLESS HER, WAS EVER QUITE A WOMAN...!
NEXT: A QUEEN RECLAIMED!
THE SOUL-SEARCHING CONCLUSION OF CONAN THE AVENGER!

KING CONAN

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

LOUISE JONES
EDITOR
DANNY FINGEROTH
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear barbarian bookpeople:

First off, I have to say I enjoy everything you people put out concerning Conan. I have just recently read KING CONAN #5, and the art was fantastic!

But what about the story? Nothing short of great! For some reason, I never did read all the Conan paperbacks, even though CONAN THE CONQUEROR got me hooked way back in high school. But thanks to the wonderful world of Marvel Comics, I'm able to follow the saga fully in graphic format, and I think it's neat. Never before has such a comprehensive comic-book cataloging of a literary canon been attempted. When you first started, years ago, I was skeptical, thinking the original CONAN THE BARBARIAN title would never last long enough to adapt and extrapolate all the Cimmerian's adventures.

Now, well, what can I say? Looks like you've got it under control. Keep those cards and KING CONANs coming!

Sturgil Smith
Elizabeth, NJ 07650

Dear Louise:

"The Ring of Rakhamon" (based on CONAN THE AVENGER) in ish #5 was very good — especially the cover. John Buscema and Ernie Chan are a great team.

I want to wish whoever takes over as the new writer for KING CONAN all the luck in the world. You have a solid groundwork, and I look forward to many good stories to come.

I wasn't crazy about the fact that Zenobia is playing the helpless wife bit. Relias was a welcome change from all the crazy wizards. And Yah Chieng, I hope, will turn out to be one of Conan's deadliest foes.

I sure hope KING CONAN goes monthly soon.

Charles David Haskell
15 W 139 Street — Apt 4R
New York, NY 10037

Not so fast, fella! We've been getting polite requests, wiley wheedlings, canny cajolings, and sundry threats — all to induce us to up the frequency with which we publish KING CONAN. We're flat-out flattered, because not long ago, they said it couldn't be done — said that the world wasn't big enough for three mighty Marvel Conan mags. And now, all Aquilonia-dom Assembled is clamoring for more of KING CONAN. Who knows — maybe we'll even manage to do it — someday. But, in the meanwhile, what the hey! There's more Conan material being published than there ever has been, so sit back and enjoy it, okay? Okay!

Dear Louise:

Old King Conan was a merry olde soul,
A merry olde soul was he,
Not much of a thinker,
But one heck of a drinker,
Fighting his way through barbarian hordes,
All for a king's room and board,
Olde King Conan was more than a man,
He was a mighty warlord!

Tony Powers
St. Michael
North Dakota 58370

Your poem, Mr. Powers,
Above all others towers,
It makes us grin from ear to ear,
And give a mighty Hyborean cheer!

Dear Louise:

Mood! Mood is what comics storytelling is all about. At least, that's the way I felt about KING CONAN #5. The first panel on page two really captured a sense of night quiet and still depth. The art is almost poetry. That goes for a good many of the half-page shots used to set place and time.

Also, whether you realize it or not, Conan is a unique character in comicsdom. Here you have three different comics-type mags all devoted to the same character — but in different stages of his individual development. There's Conan later in life, as king, with a sense of history behind him. There's Conan during his earlier days, during his era on the high seas, and so on. He lives, he breathes, he changes. And not only that, but we get to see him at different times of his life all at the same time, by buying the various different Conan mags.

Oops. Guess I got a bit astray from the issue in question — KING CONAN #5, that is. When Conan rides into Kharnria, wearing a turban and robe, I couldn't help but be reminded of Roger Moore as James Bond in THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, pulling a similar stunt. But, whereas it was utterly out of character for James Bond to ever have done such a thing, it is extraordinarily in character for Conan. Gods! To live in such a world, such a time as does Conan — with action and adventure and intrigue at every corner, beautiful women and roguish men, and always a treasure just beyond reach!

A minor criticism: I must say, the smack in the nose at the top of page 19 looked silly. And panel two on page 23 definitely hurt Conan's dignity. I know the intent was to portray his barbarianism, but the actual result was to make him look like the Hulk.

One big difference between the comics adaptation of CONAN THE AVENGER and the paperback novel original, is that the book is largely text, pulp writing and descriptions — while, by the nature of the medium, the comic is mostly dialogue, which is a vastly preferable way to tell a story — much more immediate and entertaining and revealing. And KING CONAN is a real treat when it comes to sheer length of story, too, allowing one to "get lost" in the story. But I wish you'd quit with the portflio filler material in the back. Enough, already. The art may be nice, but think how much better it would be were it accompanied by *story!*

That's all for now. Hope you can take the good comments with the bad. Keep KING CONAN comin'!

Norton Triumph
#6 Villiers Square
San Pedro, CA

We will, Norton — just you stick around and see! As for your wanting to live at the time of Conan, sure there was lots of excitement and adventure then — but only for those willing to risk life and limb in pursuit of it. In that respect our modern world really isn't all that different. Most people — then and now — seem to choose the humdrum routine of a secure way of life in exchange for the knowledge they will indeed *be* alive to live each day. What attracts us to Conan is his ability to say "No!" to a dull but secure day-to-day existence and experience the drama — and the danger — of life to its fullest. It's that quality that makes *us* want to continue chronicling his adventures and — hopefully — keeps *you* buying 'em. And that, students, concludes today's session of Philosophy 101.

Dear Marvel:

— Only Marvel could credit Danny Bulanadi with Ernie Chan's inking of KING CONAN #5.

— Only Marvel could spell Ghandar Chen's name two different ways in a two-page span.

— Only Marvel could color Red Sonja's hair blonde, and give her enough chain-mail to look like Captain America.

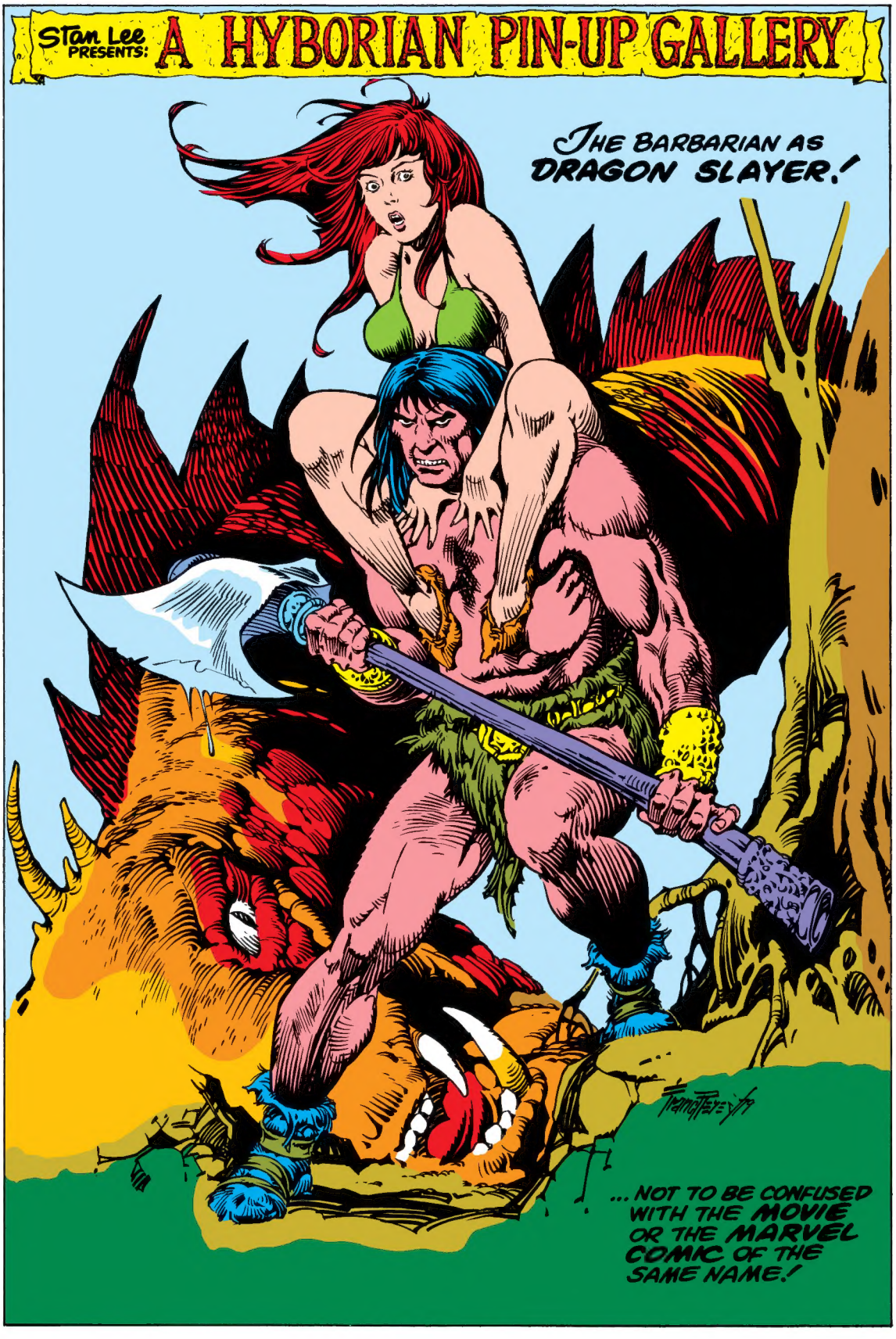
— Only Marvel could fail to give this mag's letters column a title, even though it's been around for a full year.

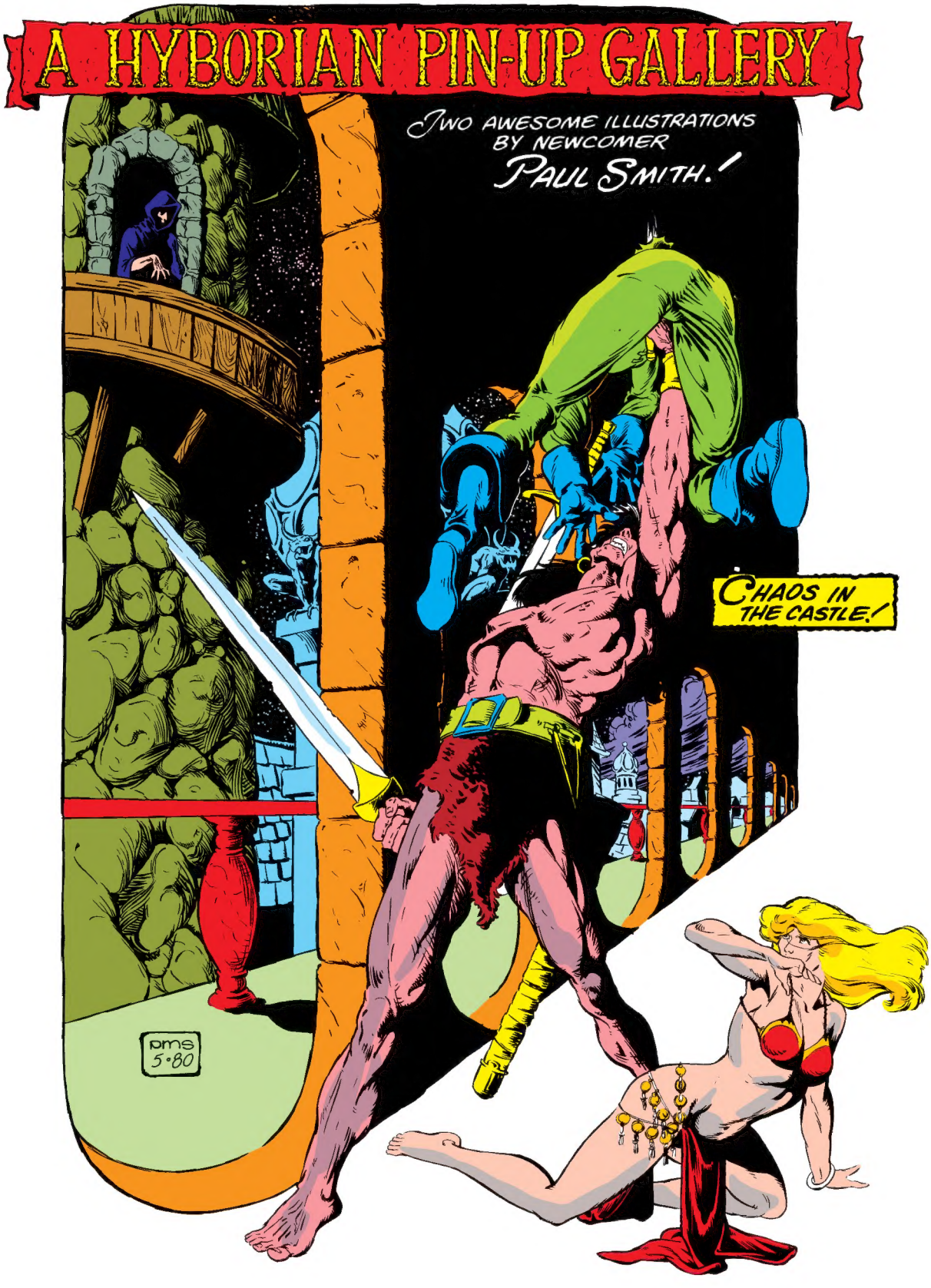
— Only Marvel could fail to give us a letters page in the latest issue, even though it's published on a quarterly basis.

— Only Marvel could do all this, and still keep me around as an avid fan, collector, and all-around, bonafide worshipper of your magnificent Conan magazines. I would like to say keep up the good work, but somehow that doesn't make sense!

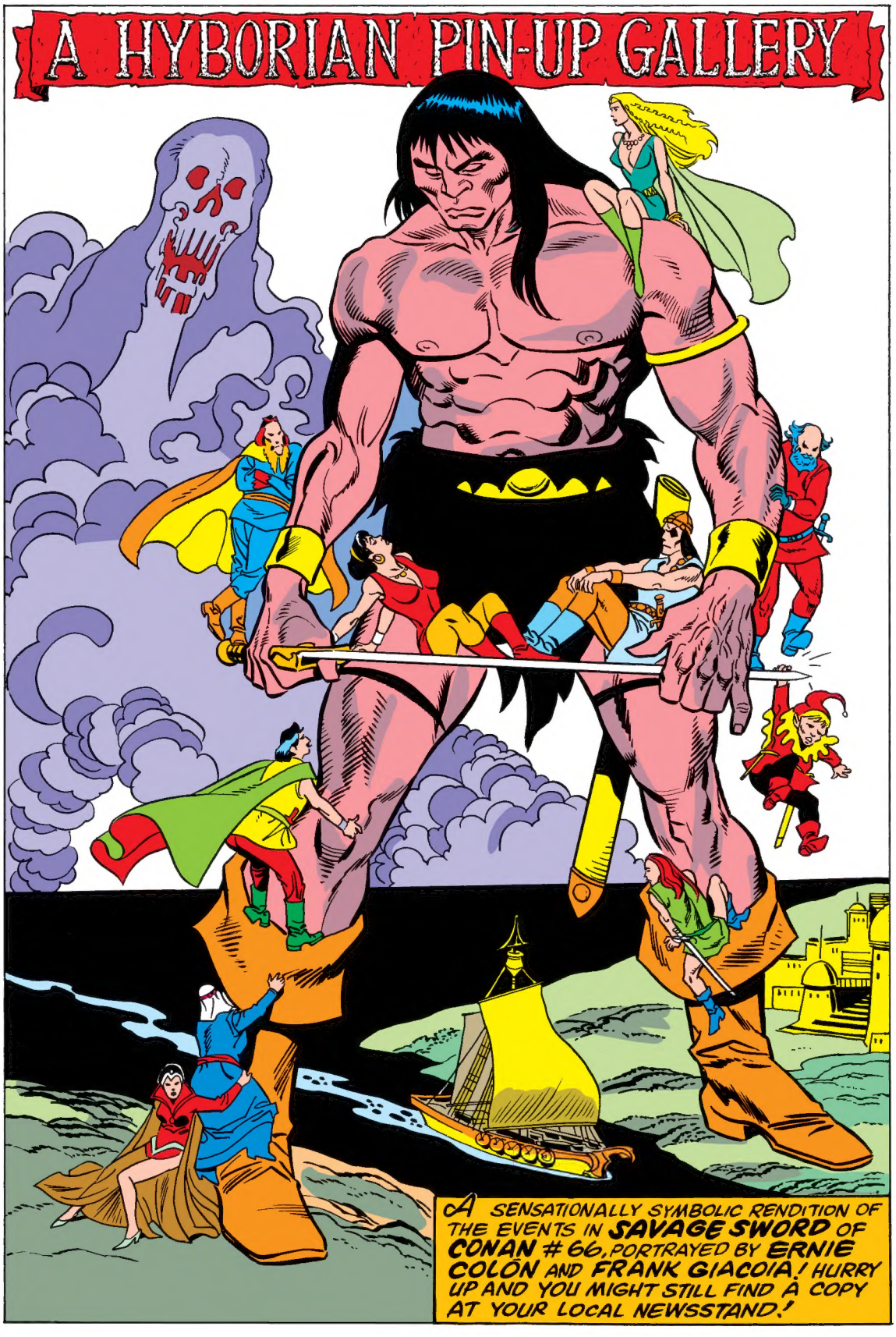
David C. Zimmerman
157 Lemay Gardens Ct
St. Louis, MO 63125

And only Marvel could have the nerve to say: *'Nuff said!*


Stan Lee PRESENTS: A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
THE BARBARIAN AS DRAGON SLAYER!
... NOT TO BE CONFUSED WITH THE MOVIE OR THE MARVEL COMIC OF THE SAME NAME!


A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
TWO AWESOME ILLUSTRATIONS BY NEWCOMER PAUL SMITH.!
CHAOS IN THE CASTLE.!
pms 5·80

A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
THE BARBARIAN... THE FROST GIANT... AND THE BEGINNING OF AN EPIC MISUNDERSTANDING!
DMS 5-80
THE FROST GIANT'S DAUGHTER


A HYBORIAN PIN-UP GALLERY
A SENSATIONALLY SYMBOLIC RENDITION OF THE EVENTS IN SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #66, PORTRAYED BY ERNIE COLÓN AND FRANK GIACOIA! HURRY UP AND YOU MIGHT STILL FIND A COPY AT YOUR LOCAL NEWSSTAND!